

Budget Address

2024-2025

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

The Honourable Caroline Wawzonek
Minister of Finance

**First Session of the
Twentieth Legislative Assembly**

May 24, 2024



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English

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French

Kīspin ki nitawihtīn ē nīhīyawihk ōma ācimōwin, tipwāsinān.

Cree

Tł̥chǫ yati k'èè. Dı wegodı newo dè, gots'o gonede.

Tłicho

Terihtl'is Dëne Sułiné yati t'a huts'elkér xa beyáyatı thezə ʐat'e, nuwe ts'ën yólti.

Chinewyan

Edi gondı dehgáh got'ie zhatié k'ée edat'eh enahddhe nide naxets'é edahkí.

South Slavey

K'áhshó got'ıne xədə k'é hederi ɬedıhtl'é yeriniwé nídé dúle.

North Slavey

Jii gwandak izhii ginjik vat'atr'ijahch'uu zhit yinohthan jii', diits'at ginohkhii.

Gwich'in

Uvanittuaq ilitchurisukupku Inuvialuktun, ququaqluta.

Inuvialuktun

គិតជាប្រព័ន្ធឌីជីថល និងការប្រើប្រាស់បច្ចេកទេស នៃការពារការងារ និងការបង្កើតរបស់ខ្លួន និងជាប្រព័ន្ធឌីជីថល និងការប្រើប្រាស់បច្ចេកទេស នៃការពារការងារ និងការបង្កើតរបស់ខ្លួន

Inuksuit

Hapkua titiqqat pijumagupkit Inuinnaqtun, uvaptinnut hivajarlutit.

Inuinnagtun

Fiscal Policy: (867) 767-9158

Department of Finance

Introduction

Mr. Speaker, with this first budget of the 20th Legislative Assembly, we are changing how we deliver on priorities in a way that is realistic, responsible and always with an eye on being financially ready for whatever the future might bring.

In February, we released a fiscal strategy for this government to help restore long-term stability in our budgets. This first budget is step one in the drive for fiscal improvement. What's new in 2024-25 are a series of simple, but measurable changes to ensure solid fiscal fundamentals today, while we help the Northwest Territories build for the future through this Assembly's vision to support people in how they want to live, work and grow with priorities focused on housing, a strong economic foundation, accessible health care, healing from trauma, and safe residents and communities. This vision will be achieved with good governance and collaboration with Northwest Territories residents, Indigenous governments and all communities.

The recent flooding and wildfire events have strained our fiscal capacity, one where expenditures already historically exceeded revenues. The Government of the Northwest Territories has a responsibility to ensure that it can always respond to emergencies and provide support in times of emergency events. That responsibility rests on leadership today, not with our children who will be the leadership of tomorrow. We must move forward responsibly now to sustain an environment where our future generations can enjoy a healthy and safe North.

As a whole of government, we must also work to achieve the priorities established by the Assembly. In many cases, we can do so through existing department budgets and positions rather than by adding new expenditures or growth to the size of the future public service. As such, this is not a ribbon-cutting budget. This is a practical and realistic budget aimed at reducing our overall expenditures in 2024-25 to help meet the benchmarks we set to both restore balance and increase our fiscal capacity to deal with unexpected events. In this budget address I will review our economic and fiscal situation, describe what we have done to set ourselves on a path towards stronger fiscal responsibility, and highlight work being done this year to deliver on the Government's mandate.

Overall, we are delivering a \$2.2-billion budget that represents difficult choices to achieve targets included in the Government's fiscal strategy. We are not meeting our full target of \$150 million in savings this year because this was never intended to be an austerity budget or cuts for the sake of cuts. We will need to continue to work towards that ongoing target in 2025-26. This budget is about value and efficiency, not just reductions, and always mindful of the responsibility to achieve the priorities set by the Assembly. We have reduced funding for some programs and in many cases added the savings elsewhere so that we are delivering on these priorities faster and smarter.

Economy Overview

Mr. Speaker, the limits we have put on our spending will not divert our attention from the challenges and opportunities that exist in the Northwest Territories economy and the Government's role in supporting a strong economic foundation, which is a priority of this Assembly. The Government has a role to play in ensuring a strong economic foundation, as does every resident, business, other governments, and non-profit organizations.

There is incredible economic potential across the territory.

We are all aware that the economy will soon be going through a significant change as the first closure of our world-class diamond mines is expected in less than two years and this will have a noticeable effect on the economy. These mines are at the centre of many of the economic relationships that exist throughout the territory. How we respond to the first closure is a key point of discussion for the territory. This closure should be a call to action to motivate collective efforts to support a strong economic foundation.

When the diamond mines opened some 25 years ago there was much talk about training and capacity building and yet we are still struggling with a resident labour force that is statistically at full employment even though some communities have high unemployment, and opportunities continue to leak outside our borders or cannot be seized for lack of workers to support business expansion. But we are not short of opportunities.

The imminent closure of one large diamond mine is concerning but the other two have socioeconomic agreements that set targets for northern hires that the mines struggle to meet. This suggests that the other mines should be well placed to receive northern workers.

More good news is that the Northwest Territories has a wealth of mineral deposits that are gaining attention as the world seeks new technologies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and which rely on critical minerals and metals. Mineral exploration in the territory has increased every year since the pandemic and 2023 investments were at their highest level in 15 years. Based on the survey of exploration intentions, we are expecting that 2024 spending will exceed 2023. We need to ready our workforce, enhance transportation and energy corridors and shore up our business environment to turn this exploration into production.

We now have some of the largest remediation projects in the history of this country happening in the Northwest Territories, nation-building scale infrastructure projects in transportation and energy advancing, and opportunities rising across a diversity of economic sectors.

A strong economic foundation requires a diversified economy to reduce the risks created by outside events beyond our control. We all want a territory where people are supported in how they want to live and work and in this budget we are answering the call to deliver on our role and responsibilities such as less red tape, transparent processes to create land access, education and training for the current and future labour force, supporting increased housing, and providing good health care for a productive workforce. We are focussing on

strengthening our collaborative approach to economic development, such as working with Indigenous governments on land-use planning and community partners on regional economic plans, so that residents, businesses and industry can take the lead finding opportunities that are in demand and creating rewarding jobs.

Through the Government Renewal Initiative and strengthened adherence to a renewed *Macroeconomic Policy Framework*, we can ensure we find the best value for public funds including supporting entrepreneurship and risk-taking in the private sector.

The Northwest Territories job market already has a low unemployment rate and a high level of job vacancies. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment budget supports its *2021-2025 Skills 4 Success* action plan and is working towards an annual target of 75 net new childcare spaces to increase the availability of licensed spaces to give more child caregivers the choice to participate in the workforce.

The pandemic is further in the past for the tourism industry as the number of operators and aircraft movements are back to pre-pandemic levels. With government support, the commercial fishery sector looks poised for growth under the revitalization strategy and with higher prices and more people fishing commercially in 2023.

The territory's households continue to lead the country in per capita disposable income and the household savings rate remains higher than any province. Recent capital investments have rejuvenated the infrastructure asset base across industries, making improvements in energy, health facilities, public works and utilities, and transportation infrastructure. Underpinning these economic strengths will be a fiscally sustainable territorial government that helps provide people and businesses with confidence to invest in the Northwest Territories.

In short, the territory continues to have a solid economic base to build on. Income, savings and investments that are fundamental to economic sustainability and prosperity are present. The Northwest Territories is a great place to live and the resilience and creativity of residents and businesses will help capitalize on opportunities. However, the Government needs to get its fiscal house in order and keep it that way to continue to remain a supportive economic partner with the capacity to deliver quality programs and investments in infrastructure.

Fiscal Summary

Mr. Speaker, the Government has fiscal resources, but we do not want to be using public revenues to pay \$30 million a year servicing debt. Our budget is based on the fundamental principle that we do not borrow for programs and services offered today and push those expenditures to future taxpayers. That is why the *Fiscal Responsibility Policy* makes it clear that we will not borrow for the operating budget but only borrow for investments in capital assets that benefit future generations.

With this Budget we are projecting a \$294-million operating surplus for 2024-25, which includes \$110 million in federal disaster relief assistance for recent flooding and fire costs. This surplus is the largest projected operating surplus in 25 years; however, to get us on track to have our long-term fiscal house in order, this projected surplus must fund the 2024-25 capital plan of \$268 million as well as start to allocate money towards paying down our debt. This means that as we go through the fiscal year, when new needs or opportunities arise, we will be first asking departments to find funding from within existing budgets instead of asking for new money. Departments are also being asked to carefully evaluate what they can do without, or put another way, to budget within what they already have.

Our revenue is forecast to increase two per cent from 2023-24 to reach \$2.6 billion this year. Keeping to our fiscal strategy, we are holding the growth in departmental expenditures below that of revenues. The 2024-25 operating budget is \$2.2 billion, which is only \$24 million higher than last year's budget and growth of one per cent. If we combine the operating and capital budgets, we will spend almost \$2.6 billion.

For this year, we are proposing \$7.7 million in initiatives, including \$3.1 million carried over from initiatives started in the previous Assembly.

Barring a repeat of last year's expenditure shocks, the projected 2024-25 operating surplus will fund the entire capital plan this year and we are expecting to reduce short-term borrowing by \$34 million by March 31, 2025. However, we are not done yet. We stay committed to reach our target of a \$150-million reduction in short-term debt by the end of the Assembly. The 2024-25 budget exceeds the guidelines in the *Fiscal Responsibility Policy*, keeping debt affordable and below the federally-imposed borrowing limit.

As we embarked on our efforts for fiscal sustainability, we asked departments to review and categorize all their programs including those required by legislation, for public safety, or core to the departments' mandates. We asked who benefits from the various programs and whether a program is connected to this Assembly's priorities. From this exercise, we have accepted \$100 million in combined revenue increases and expenditure adjustments for this budget.

Mr. Speaker, Budget 2024-25 shows our commitment to restoring balance to our finances by ensuring our resources are used in a manner that is efficient and directed towards policies and programs that are achieving the objectives set by the Assembly. Our focus is on managing spending growth and now, more than ever, reinforcing the cultural shift started through the Government Renewal Initiative to ensure that we get value for every dollar we invest in delivering programs and services.

Expenditure management that is not done in a thoughtful way can have implications for future program and service delivery. That is why we are proposing to add \$42 million in additional program spending to support increased program costs.

Key cost pressures that we need to address in the fiscal strategy are related to spending pressures in health and the low water levels that are challenging for the Northwest Territories Power Corporation and Marine Transportation Services.

Over the next year, we will put shared efforts to ensure health spending remains within its budget. Health spending is a third of our operating budget and consistently requires top-ups throughout the year. In 2023-24 alone, health spending is projected to be \$64 million higher than budgeted. We are proposing to add \$37 million to the Department of Health and Social Services' 2024-25 budget that reflects the additional needs identified over the past year and to identify a right sized budget that will help provide stability to our health care services.

We are mitigating the high cost of living with \$30 million to help keep power rates stable. As a regulated utility, the Northwest Territories Power Corporation has little room to avoid passing the increased costs resulting from unprecedented low water to rate payers, and so the Government will step in to help fill this emergency gap. This is an example of why we must maintain fiscal capacity into the future to be able to support residents through extreme or unprecedented events.

Managing expenditure growth also means that we have the resources to focus on the Government's priorities. Operating expenditures are being reduced by \$156 million this year, including \$48 million in savings through fiscal strategy measures. These savings are offset by \$168 million in program enhancements and adjustments. Since much of the program increases reflect past flood and wildfire recovery costs, this spending will be eliminated in future years.

The public service has grown far faster than the private sector over the past few years. This means not only significantly increased public cost but also has implications for the availability of labour to the private sector. We need to look carefully at this growth. That said, the programs and services that we are expected to deliver across the geographic expanse of the territory rely on a strong public service and therefore any fiscal sustainability efforts that considered eliminating positions looked first at vacant positions or opportunities for attrition. For positions that may be affected, the Government is fully committed to the retention of any affected employees and every effort will be made to retain employees within the public service. We have been very effective at placing affected employees in the past and we are confident we will have similar results this time. Our public service is the Government's greatest asset and we will continue to ensure that the Government of the Northwest Territories is a welcoming and attractive workplace.

As noted, the fiscal sustainability actions proposed in this budget will not be enough to achieve the fiscal strategy we set out. We have deliberately not forced immediate cost neutrality in program and service delivery, particularly in health services delivery, because we are realistic about the challenges involved in doing a fulsome review of spending and are determined that we will accomplish this task by seeking efficiencies, avoiding duplication, and redeploying what is not working to that which does provide value.

Drive for Value

Mr. Speaker, I take pride that this budget is not about what we are spending more on but rather how we are spending smarter. Departments are finding savings and innovating services within their existing budgets.

We currently spend millions of dollars to run the Fort Smith Correctional Complex that has capacity for 21 inmates but on average only has ten. We are planning to close it but not simply walk away from a valuable asset with well trained staff. Over the coming months, the Government will examine how this asset could be re-purposed into a wellness centre. To do so might ultimately require some reinvestment for renovations but to not do so leaves us spending money that is not effective or efficient. This is an example of connecting the dots between an inefficient use of public funds to areas of need that reflect the priorities of the Assembly. The Department of Justice, in collaboration with other departments, will begin this work immediately and we will be seeking out other opportunities to redeploy existing infrastructure to better meet the needs of the Northwest Territories.

Justice is also using technology to enhance policing services, save money and reduce risk. For example, Justice will complete its project to provide 19 RCMP detachments with the capability to hold bail appearances online. This will allow RCMP members to spend more time in their home communities and make more effective use of their time and resources.

Through the Department of Finance, we are using technology to save almost \$700,000 each year by upgrading the phone system, simplifying video conferencing equipment and software with less expensive options, and taking advantage of our scale for other types of software that was used in one department but is now applied in another. Finance is home to the NWT Centre for Geomatics, which is working with other departments and communities to provide flood mapping data, geospatial data for land-use planning, and operational tools for emergency management and response.

Mr. Speaker, we will be the first government in the country to partner with the federal IT Apprenticeship Program for Indigenous Peoples, with Finance spearheading a memorandum of understanding with Employment and Social Development Canada to provide opportunities for Indigenous candidates to participate from their home communities and gain meaningful employment with the Government while taking advantage of training and support resources offered through this federal program.

Drug therapies and their unit costs are substantial sources of spending pressure and the Department of Health and Social Services has been working with counterparts across Canada to secure Product Listing Agreements with drug manufacturers for rebates under the Extended Health Benefits program. This approach has proved a successful cost-saving measure and in this past year, the Department has secured several drug agreements used in the chemotherapy program, giving us access to most drugs used in the treatment at a lower cost. With treatment therapies continuing to change and new drugs coming to market regularly, these efforts help keep pace with a growing demand. Health and Social Services will be seeking further drug agreements for other treatments and services this year.

The Department of Environment and Climate Change is successful in this budget to fund innovative programs and projects without requesting new funding by securing \$20 million in federal funds. Most of these agreements are multi-year and will be used for programs related to wildlife, conservation, wildfire prevention and mitigation, emergency management, climate change and waters. Partnering with the departments of Finance and Municipal and Community Affairs, the Department is implementing the Land Operations Tenure System, which is an integrated database for delivering land tenure and property assessment and tax services to reduce the administrative burden for clients. The Department will also be optimizing its recent merger to ensure it is yielding efficiency gains.

The departments of Executive and Indigenous Affairs and Education, Culture and Employment are committed to advancing Integrated Service Delivery for improved coordination and information sharing among different strategies for homelessness, anti-poverty, reducing alcohol abuse, and improving food security.

The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs has found resources within its existing budget to create a junior property assessor program to encourage individuals interested in assessment to join the workforce and learn on the job. By 2027-28, the department aims to fill three junior assessor jobs that will help ensure that properties are accurately assessed for property tax purposes.

From Public and Employee Engagement to Action

I want to give a special thank you to the over 900 public servants who sent in over 1,800 individual suggestions to help deliver better value with public funds. We are already acting on many of these suggestions in this budget.

For example, we will be consolidating immigration policy into Education, Culture and Employment, which will improve accessibility to the Northwest Territories Nominee Program. The various programs offering support to the arts sector will be consolidated into the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment. Both of these actions bring government services under one department for a single point of contact, rather than spread between staff in different departments, and is expected to result in a better service experience. Similarly, there were many suggestions about reviewing assistance provided to businesses and non-government organizations to ensure they are consistent. Industry, Tourism and Investment will act on these ideas by centralizing business supports. The Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs will lead streamlining assistance for non-governmental organization funding for ease of access for user groups and ease of reporting for transparency.

Another example is Infrastructure's Technology Service Centre merger with Finance's Information Systems Shared Services Client Care desk. Bringing together employees working within similar spheres is expected to increase productivity and help improve the quality of program delivery.

Based on employee suggestions, we will also be examining our portfolio of assets, specifically leases and vehicles, to maximize use of our government-wide resources this fiscal year. This will include a review of existing leased space to make better use of that space, reduce our overall footprint and ultimately reduce costs. Alongside this work will be an evaluation of the remote work policy to assess its effectiveness in support of employee productivity and morale because changing the spaces we work in needs to be a positive opportunity for flexibility. We will be charting a path towards centralized mobile fleet management. This work will take some time and likely involve some cost to initially set up but will ultimately replace an inefficient and expensive approach of underused vehicles and poor economies of scale for procurement.

Again, there is no ribbon cutting in those changes, but we are committed to listening to those delivering programs and services and committed to making programs and services more responsive and effective in achieving the goals of the Assembly without new dollars needed.

Departmental Highlights

While we are indeed curtailing spending growth, the good news is that we are confident that future expenditure management will justify including \$4.6 million in new spending in 2024-25.

The new spending in this budget reflects the Government's mandate to achieve the priorities set by the 20th Assembly. We propose an additional \$793,000 to support the transition to a green economy with resources dedicated to the Energy Action Plan and building a fast-charging network for electric vehicles in the territory.

The Government continues the collaborative work to complete the *Mineral Resources Act* regulations with a proposed \$393,000 to finish the final step in bringing the legislation into force. We are collaborating with the Intergovernmental Council to ensure the regulations under development are comprehensive and are reaching out to other Indigenous governments for their participation.

We want to build on the success of the territory as a destination for filmmakers to embrace the opportunities that the ever-growing global demand for video and media content offers to showcase the territory's nature and beauty. We propose to add \$529,000 to increase the Northwest Territories Film and Media Strategy's Film Rebate Program. This program helps with high production costs and supports the NWT Film Commission. Since 2015, every dollar spent under the rebate program has been associated with almost nine dollars spent in the territory on production.

We are also proposing in this budget to contribute a new one million dollars to Housing NWT to continue the cost-sharing arrangement for the Canada-NWT Housing Benefit that provides rental affordability assistance to low-income households. We expect to continue this for two more years and enable a total of \$9.6 million in federal and territorial support over three years to help keep rents affordable for Northwest Territories residents.

Housing is also a key element to support success in addictions. We are proposing to spend \$1.6 million on the Transitional Housing Addictions Recovery Program that is administered through the departments of Health and Social Services and Infrastructure in partnership with Housing NWT. The program is expected to have locations open this year in Yellowknife and Inuvik in collaboration with non-profit organizations to ensure units are available for people returning from treatment to have a safe and supported place to continue a journey towards health and wellness.

These additional funds support an operating budget of over \$121 million for Housing NWT. However, we recognize that no one entity or government will be able to solve the housing crisis alone. As a result, Housing NWT is focusing on the various levels of partnership required to ensure that there is funding available to leverage but also coordination across governments on all aspects of the housing continuum without unnecessary duplication. For example, Housing NWT has now signed four agreements with Indigenous governments to signal not only our commitment to working with each Indigenous government but also to identify the key areas of focus on our work with each individual government. Another example is a partnership with Habitat for Humanity which will result in over 10 builds completed by 2028, and this model is being expanded to more and more communities.

With a more focused fiscal approach, every department can direct their core work towards shared priorities without requiring new funding. Housing is a prime example. Executive and Indigenous Affairs is supporting the delivery of the homelessness strategy, Environment and Climate Change is working to support access to land for housing development, and Municipal and Community Affairs is supporting land-use planning for housing development. As well, the Department of Finance is supporting a housing market needs assessment using existing internal resources to provide territorial data on the type and sizes of homes required to meet the needs of all residents in the Northwest Territories. The assessment will rely on a model used by other jurisdictions which will support not only our federal engagement strategy but also our work with partner organizations in addressing the various needs across the housing continuum in the Northwest Territories.

In support of the priority for safe residents and communities we propose in this budget to put a total of \$815,000 more into public safety for more relief staffing in the 9-1-1 program and dedicated specialists in high-risk areas including emergency management. These positions will directly help keep residents and communities informed during emergencies and ensure that there is an adequate complement of staff at the receiving end of an emergency call.

In addition, this budget also includes funds to improve the ability of the RCMP to support public safety. We are proposing to create a \$1.3 million Territorial Crime Reduction Unit that will serve the entire territory with specialized resources to support investigations and proactive enforcement aimed at disrupting illicit drug supply and enhancing enforcement targeting criminal networks. We are proposing to add \$372,000 this budget and \$744,000 annually in future budgets to enhance the RCMP Emergency Response Team, comprising officers with advanced training and equipment, who will assist in the successful resolution of dangerous situations. This budget will also add four new officer positions in regions across

the Northwest Territories through the First Nations and Inuit Policing Program, and two additional general duty officer positions at the Fort Providence detachment.

Looking Ahead

Directly after this budget, departments will start the process to develop next year's budget and the 2025-26 capital budget this fall. Year two of this Assembly will require more work to restore balance to our fiscal situation. We are looking to continue the drive for fiscal improvement and encourage the culture of continuous evaluation that will give us confidence that we are getting value for dollars spent.

Conclusion

Mr. Speaker, it takes imagination to answer our need for fiscal sustainability while still delivering on the Government's mandate responsibilities. With all certainty, we are stronger together. It is beyond doubt that Northerners can pull together for whatever challenges they face.

The response by the public service to the call for making changes is all the evidence we need to be confident that we have a culture of creativity, determination to embrace change and a spirit of continual improvement.

I want to thank all the Members of this Assembly for the work we have done together to provide a set of priorities that is focused and clear as well as for all of discussions had to date about this Budget as a step towards achieving those priorities. I am also grateful for the correspondence and discussions from residents, governments, organizations and our civil service that have helped shape a budget that delivers in a fiscally responsible way.

Mr. Speaker, we have set a foundation to affect change. We must ensure that the Northwest Territories is positioned to take advantage of opportunities while we continue to build upon our successes. Fiscal policies and strategies designed to manage debt and risks effectively, ensuring the longevity of our programs, build these foundations. We are dedicated to doing things the right way, with positive relationships, seizing our economic advantages, and embracing opportunities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Budget Papers

2024-2025

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

A ♦ Economic Review

B ♦ Fiscal Review

May 24, 2024

ECONOMIC REVIEW

Overview

The Northwest Territories (NWT) economy grew modestly in 2023, boosted by higher than expected private and public investment. Although employment decreased 3.2 per cent from 2022 to 2023, the employment rate remains high and the labour market is strong with unemployment rates below historical averages. Average weekly earnings increased almost 2 per cent, supporting higher consumer spending and retail sales. Higher diamond prices increased shipment values despite a decline in year-over-year production. However, despite three consecutive years of growth, the NWT economy is on a path of shrinking output and activity.

Economic growth is not expected this year. The 2024 economic forecast projects a mild contraction, as lower diamond mine production and less private and public investments are expected to more than offset increased consumer and government spending. Inflation is moderating but high interest rates will continue to affect mortgages and investments. The most pressing issues continue to be the planned 2026 closure of the Diavik Diamond Mine and the risk that projected new private sector activities do not come to fruition.

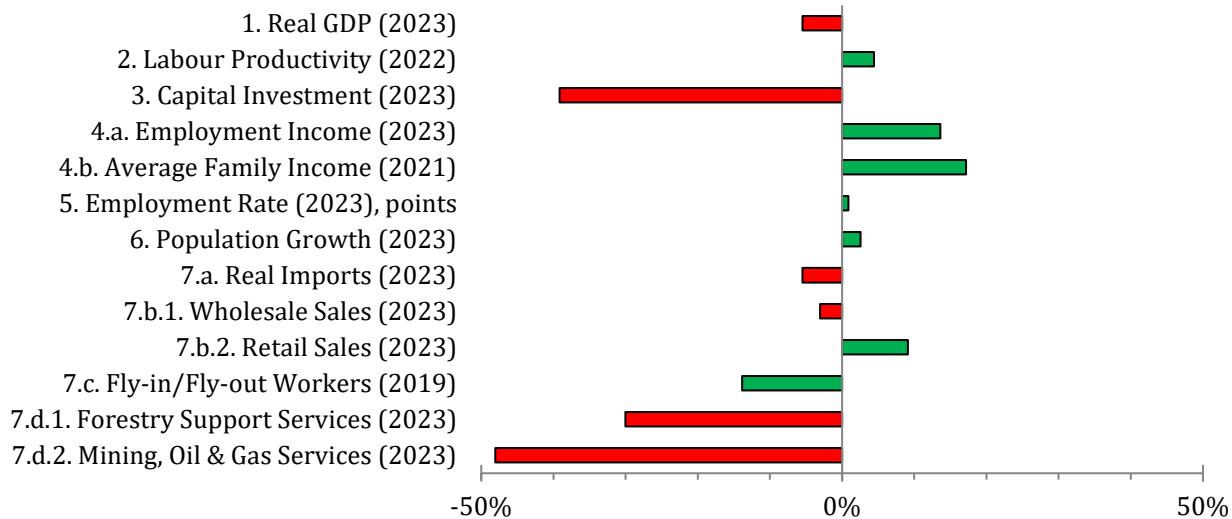
Current State of the Economy

Indicators from the *Macroeconomic Policy Framework*¹ have been used to measure the performance of the NWT economy. The *Framework* was developed in 2007 following a consultation with NWT residents that resulted in a consensus that the future economic growth should be balanced, diversified, and sustainable. The *Framework* provides a broad measure of the effects of policy, government spending, and investment decisions that support economic development. These performance indicators compare current indicator values to their 2014 baseline level. The year 2014 was chosen as the baseline because it reflects the year that the management of lands, waters and non-renewable resources were devolved from Canada to the Northwest Territories.

In the following figure, the performance indicators with red bars show a worsening change in their values and the indicators with green bars show an improvement in their values since the 2014 benchmark. All performance indicators reflect the most current data available.

¹ <https://www.fin.gov.nt.ca/en/resources/macroeconomic-policy-framework>

Macroeconomic Policy Framework Performance Indicators



Source: Statistics Canada, NWT Bureau of Statistics and NWT Finance

Seven of the 13 indicators have improved. These improvements occurred primarily in indicators that measure living standards. Productivity, employment and family incomes, local employment, population growth, and retail sales are higher now than in 2014, while the number of non-resident, fly-in/fly-out workers is lower (fewer non-resident workers is an improvement). The most notable increases are in labour productivity, which drives long-term economic growth, efficiency, and increased wages, and the employment rate, which suggests the economy, despite being smaller compared to 2014, continues to provide NWT residents with job opportunities. Taken together, improvements in these seven indicators point to favourable labour market conditions and a higher quality of life.

Six of the 13 indicators have worsened since 2014. Real GDP declined modestly, as did imports and wholesale purchases. Forestry support services decreased significantly from 2014 but is a small component of the overall economy. The two most significant declines are in capital investment, and mining, oil and gas services, which are linked.

Economic Outlook

The NWT economy has recovered from 2020 lows: economic output, investment, imports, and earnings all expanded throughout 2021 to 2023, while household spending, public expenditure, and resident employment surpassed pre-pandemic highs. Over the near term, however, the NWT economic growth is expected to moderate, with mild declines in economic output, investment, exports and employment. Despite this, the NWT labour market is expected to remain robust with rising wages and falling inflation contributing to increased household spending.

Northwest Territories Economic Outlook

Chained (2017) millions of dollars unless otherwise stated.

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023e	2024f
Gross Domestic Product	4,684	4,502	4,097	4,276	4,396	4,420	4,370
<i>Percent Change</i>	1.2	(3.9)	(9.0)	4.4	2.8	0.6	(1.1)
Total Investment	1,115	923	684	772	900	973	927
<i>Percent Change</i>	(4.5)	(17.2)	(25.9)	12.9	16.6	8.1	(4.7)
Household Expenditure	1,754	1,762	1,745	1,811	1,768	1,787	1,809
<i>Percent Change</i>	1.6	0.5	(1.0)	3.8	(2.4)	1.1	1.2
Government Expenditure	2,398	2,451	2,542	2,636	2,753	2,849	2,856
<i>Percent Change</i>	3.2	2.2	3.7	3.7	4.4	3.5	0.3
Exports	2,936	2,675	2,126	2,249	2,396	2,360	2,303
<i>Percent Change</i>	0.9	(8.9)	(20.5)	5.8	6.5	(1.5)	(2.4)
Imports	3,616	3,378	3,131	3,292	3,550	3,678	3,654
<i>Percent Change</i>	0.4	(6.6)	(7.3)	5.1	7.8	3.6	(0.7)
Employment (Number of Residents)	22,700	23,000	21,800	23,500	24,700	23,900	23,500
<i>Percent Change</i>	0.9	1.3	(5.2)	7.8	5.1	(3.2)	(1.7)
Average Weekly Earnings	1,423	1,457	1,511	1,527	1,565	1,594	1,626
<i>Percent Change</i>	1.4	2.4	3.7	1.1	2.5	1.9	2.0
CPI (All-Items), Yellowknife	136.6	138.8	138.9	142.0	151.9	156.9	160.7
<i>Percent Change</i>	2.3	1.6	0.1	2.2	7.0	3.3	2.4

Note: Preliminary results for 2023 real GDP by Industry at basic prices were released on May 1, 2024. The forecasts in this Economic Review use expenditure-based real GDP at market prices, which will be released November 2024.

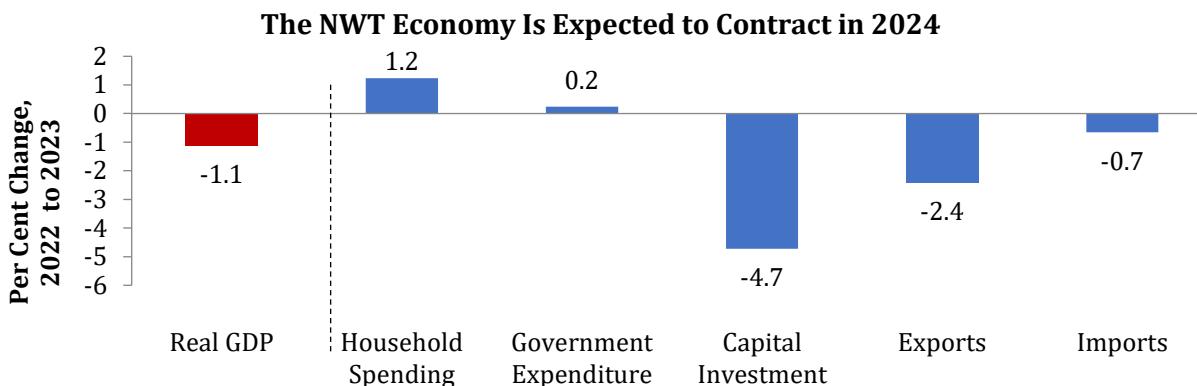
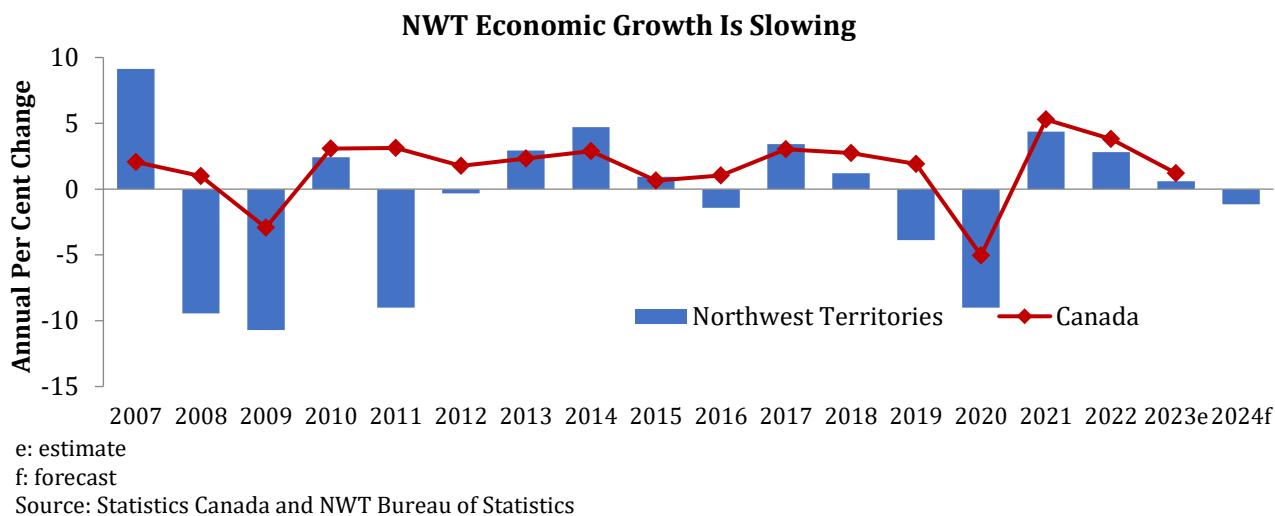
e: estimate

f: forecast

Source: Statistics Canada and NWT Bureau of Statistics

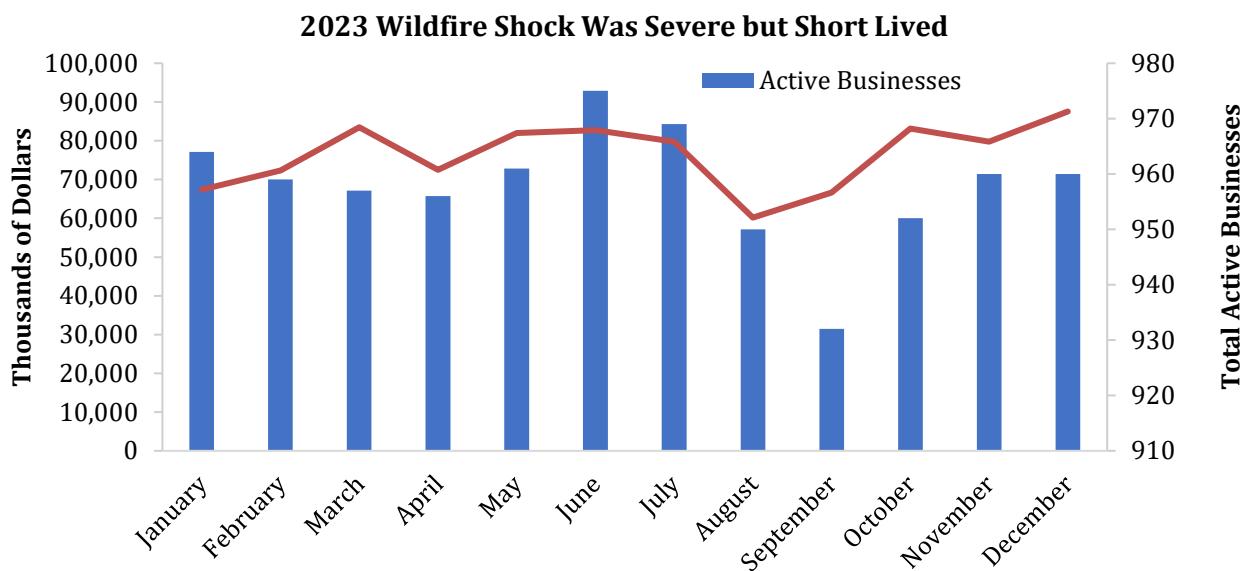
Economic Outlook - *real GDP*

Real GDP is projected to shrink by 1.1 per cent in 2024 following three consecutive years of growth. The forecast decline in economic output is due to a 4.7 per cent drop in total investment, as diamond mine investment continues to wind down, as well as a 2.4 per cent fall in exports due to lower diamond mine and oil and gas production. Government spending is also projected to slow in 2024 as pandemic-related supports continue to unwind. This decline will be offset by robust employment, a 2.0 per cent increase in weekly earnings, and a fall in consumer price inflation to 2.4 per cent, which will support a 1.2 per cent increase in household spending.



The NWT economy was expected to contract in 2023, as forecast in Budget 2023-24, but surprised on the upside with positive growth. Higher than expected investment in the diamond mines and construction of the Yellowknife swimming pool, combined with stronger than projected household and government spending, helped the economy grow by 0.6 per cent last year. The modest 2023 real GDP growth, despite the unprecedented wildfire season, demonstrated a surprisingly resilient NWT economy.

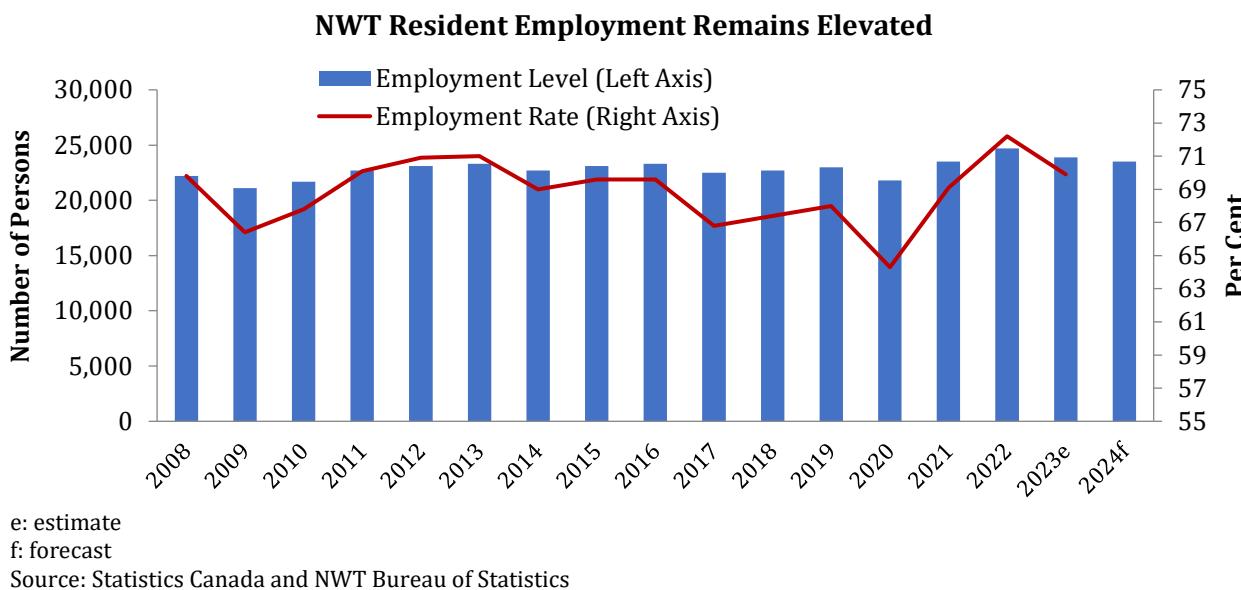
The severe 2023 wildfire season caused a sharp economic shock. Between May and September 2023, 4 million hectares of land burned, 11 communities were evacuated, and over 2,000 smoke hours occurred. The direct cost was over \$250 million in evacuation, firefighting, and rebuilding costs, while the indirect economic cost was disrupted supply chains, business closures, and lost work hours. Between June and September 2023, the number of active businesses declined 4.4 per cent (or 43 businesses), retail sales fell 19.4 per cent (or \$16 million), and jobs dropped 8.3 per cent (or 2,400 positions). However, while the economic impact was severe, it was short lived. By December 2023, indicators returned to pre-wildfire levels. Incomes and earnings did not decline, largely because the diamond mines did not shut down, many employers continued to pay their employees including all levels of government, and roughly 4,800 residents were supported through the Evacuation Income Disruption Program.



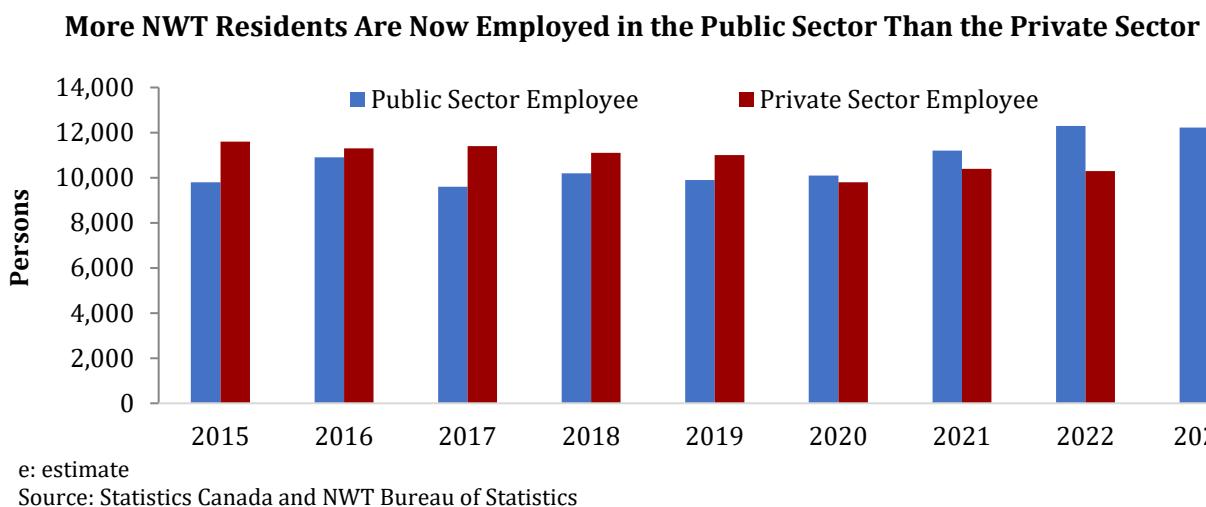
Source: Statistics Canada and NWT Bureau of Statistics

Economic Outlook – Employment

Resident employment is projected to decrease by 1.7 per cent in 2024 (or 400 people) after falling 3.2 per cent in 2023. Despite this projected decline, resident employment is expected to remain above late 2010s levels, and the territorial employment rate, which measures the share of the working-age population that is actively employed, is expected to remain close to 69.9 per cent, as it was in 2023. The employment rate is significantly higher in Yellowknife than in other NWT communities (79 per cent compared to 59 per cent in 2023) and is notably higher for non-Indigenous residents than Indigenous residents (82 per cent compared to 54 per cent in 2023). These employment rate differences are due to a combination of factors, including fewer job opportunities outside of the capital, the fact that many non-Indigenous residents relocated to the NWT for work, and choices of individuals to not participate in the market economy. Regional differences are expected to continue, particularly as diamond mining and oil and gas, which are large employers of local labour in communities outside Yellowknife, wind down.

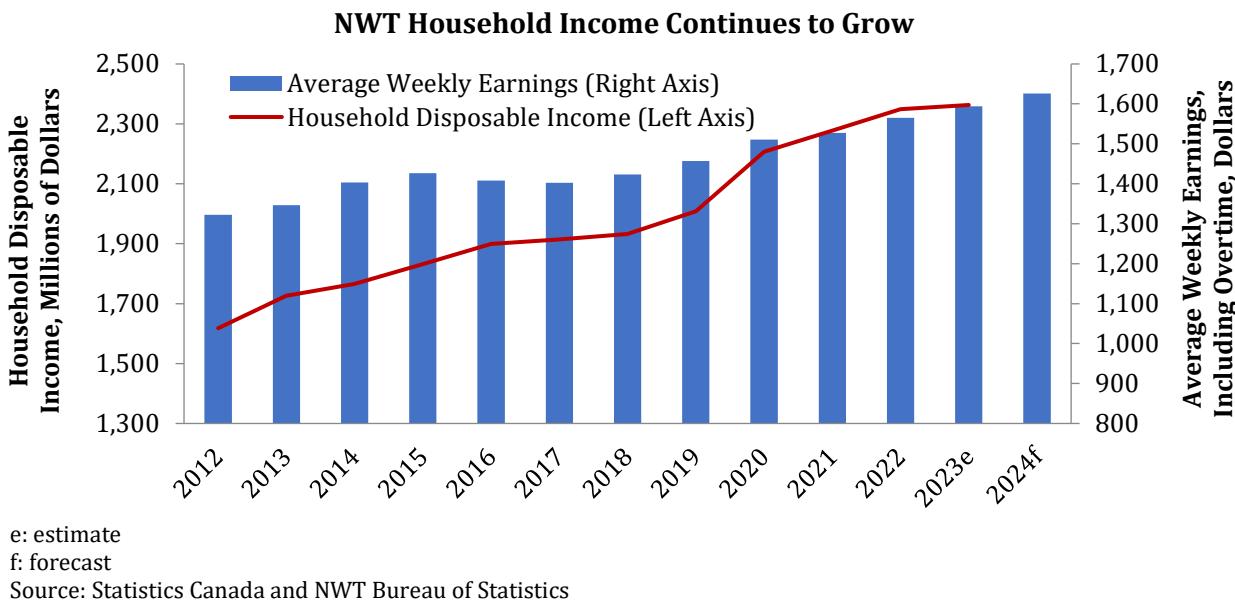


The declines in diamond mining and oil and gas operations have resulted in decreases in private sector employment. Since the pandemic, more NWT residents work in the public sector than in the private sector. In 2023 over half of employed residents (or 12,220 people) were employed by the public sector while just under 42 per cent (or 10,060 people) worked for private businesses. Public administration alone employs over 7,800 NWT residents, or one-third of all NWT employees, including courts, policing, corrections services, firefighting services, defence, and government administration but excluding the health, social assistance, and education sectors. Although an economy increasingly dependent on government could lead to a hollowing out of the private sector, the large public sector also acts as an economic stabilizer. Because government employment is not prone to the boom-and-bust cycles of the resource industry, it is able to offer relatively high incomes and steady employment during economic shocks such as pandemics and wildfires.



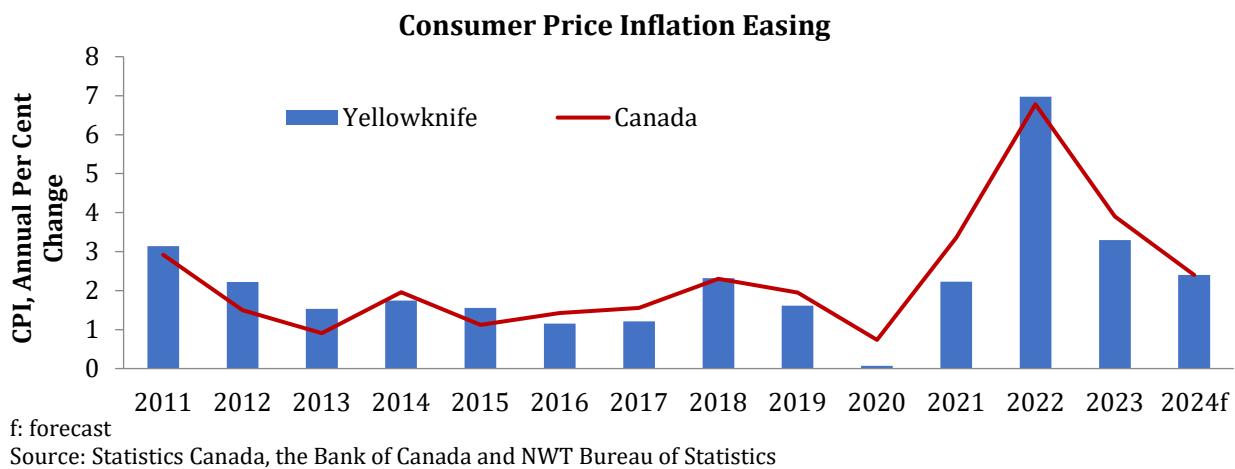
Economic Outlook – *Average Weekly Earnings*

Tight labour markets will continue to push wages higher over the near term. Average weekly earnings, currently the highest in Canada after Nunavut, are projected to increase 2.0 per cent in 2024 after rising an estimated 1.9 per cent in 2023.



Economic Outlook – *Consumer Prices*

Consumer price inflation is projected to continue to slow in 2024. Supply chain disruptions and commodity price fluctuations have eased and higher interest rates are causing inflation rates to fall. The Yellowknife Consumer Price Index (CPI) is forecast to increase 2.4 per cent in 2024.



Risks to the Outlook

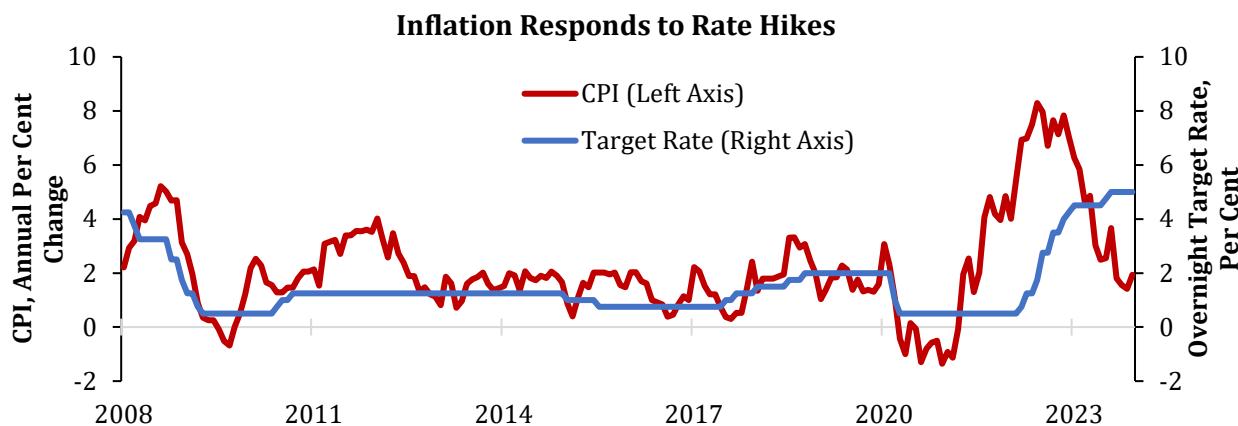
Near-term risks to the economic outlook include higher-for-longer interest rates that could slow business activity, dampen consumer spending, and exacerbate infrastructure gaps, including the residential housing shortage, through lower levels of investment. Other negative risks include global factors such as continued political unrest and wars increase prices and cause supply chains disruptions. However, the NWT economy tends to be resilient, mainly due to the stabilizing influence of government spending and employment. Near-term challenges can be met, but it is the potential failure to prepare for longer-term, structural shifts in the NWT economy that pose the largest risk to the territorial economic outlook.

The top structural challenge is the impending diamond mine closures. Connected to this is the continued lack of economic diversification and ongoing shortages for skilled and unskilled labour, especially in smaller communities. These challenges must be addressed to ease the territorial economy into a new normal without the diamond mines.

Positive risks include the increased mineral exploration investments that may lead to new mining operations. Even if potential new mines do not replace the world-class diamond mines, they can help stabilize the economy with high paying jobs and business opportunities. However, there is also the possibility that new mines will not materialize soon and preparation for a different sort of economy will be crucial.

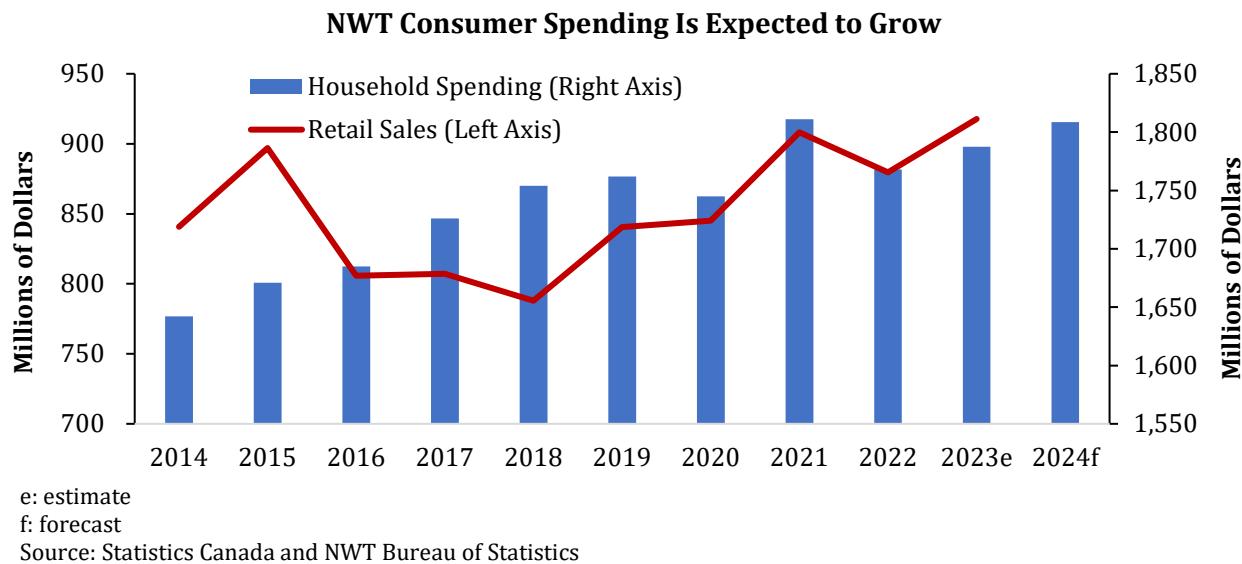
Risks to the Outlook – *Higher for Longer Interest Rates*

In response to rising inflation in 2022 and 2023, the Bank of Canada increased its policy rate from 0.5 per cent in January 2022 to 5.0 per cent in July 2023, where it currently remains. Higher interest rates made borrowing and investing more expensive for businesses and consumers, slowing economic activity and causing consumer price index (CPI) inflation to fall. The low and stable inflation forecast for 2024 will ease the territory's high cost of living and improve residents' purchasing power. With monthly CPI growth rates falling to target levels, it is expected that the worst of inflation is over and that interest rate drops may be forthcoming in 2024 and 2025.



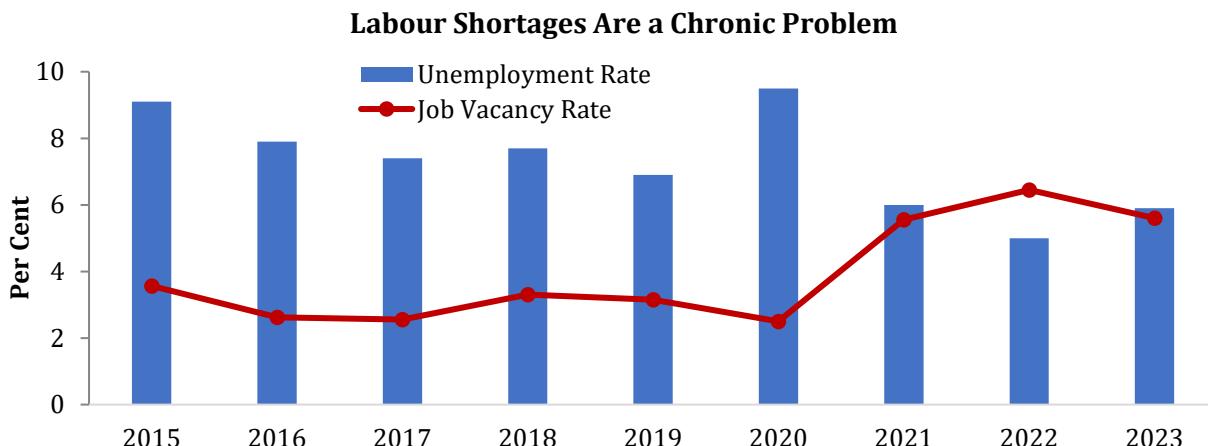
Source: The Bank of Canada and NWT Finance

However, should inflation become sticky (underlying changes to how certain goods and services are priced keeping their inflation growth above target), interest rates are likely to remain elevated. Higher-for-longer interest rates could stifle spending by households, businesses, and industry as new debt, including mortgages, becomes more expensive and the risk of loan default increases. Higher interest rates also aggravate underlying concerns about debt repayments made by NWT residents, as a larger share of their household income must go to loan servicing costs, reducing household disposable income. This will lead to less economic activity, as seen in 2022, where household spending and retail sales both fell. Consumer spending is expected to grow moderately in the near term, though sticky inflation and interest rates risks reducing forecasted growth in consumer spending further.



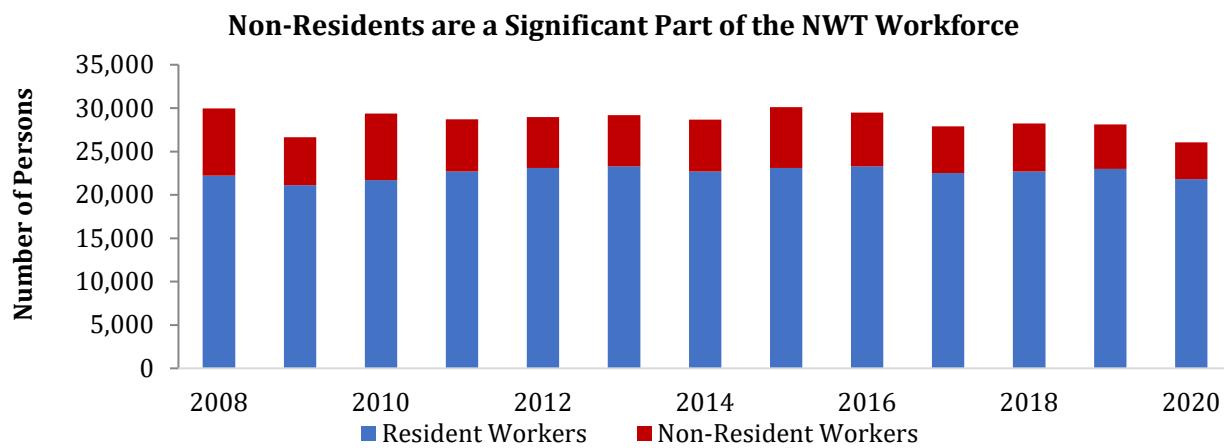
Risks to the Outlook – *Labour Shortages*

The unemployment rate rose from 5.0 per cent in 2022 to 5.9 per cent in 2023, though it remains much lower than the 7.9 per cent average between 2011-2019. This uptick in the unemployment rate (the share of working-age residents who are not employed but looking for work) accompanied a decline in the job vacancy rate from 6.5 per cent in 2022 to 5.6 per cent in 2023. Fewer job openings and an increase in available workers has eased labour shortages, which were particularly acute in 2022 and 2023 in health care, construction, food services, and education. Despite improvements, labour shortages remain an ongoing challenge given the small size of the NWT population and resident workforce. Chronic labour shortages pose risks to the economic outlook as an inability to fill vacant positions prevents businesses from maintaining or expanding their operations and diminishes the quality of life for territorial residents by reducing the variety and availability of public services.



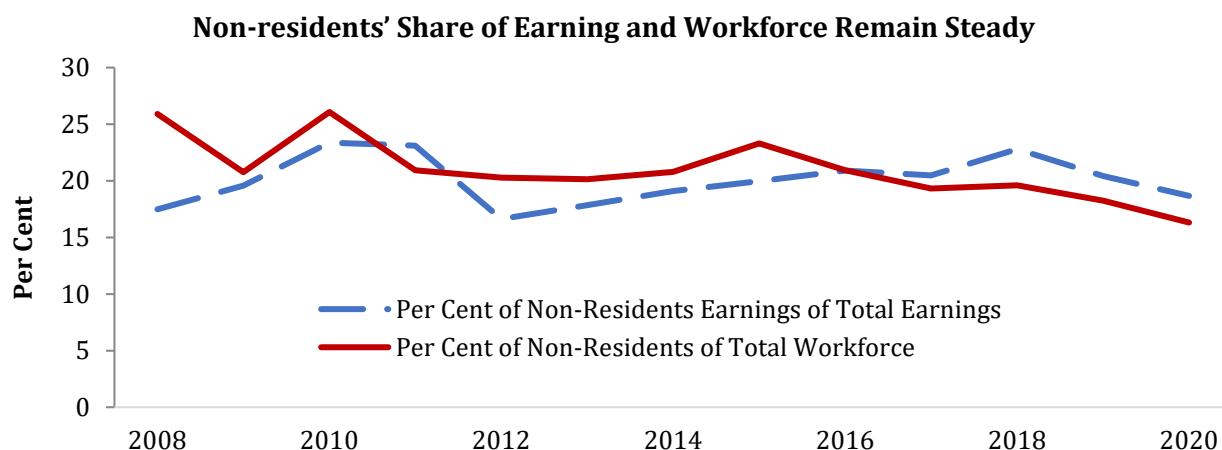
Source: Statistics Canada and NWT Bureau of Statistics

Labour shortages due to the small territorial population are a chronic problem and are the major reason for the NWT's high rate of non-resident workers. The number of non-resident workers employed in the NWT averaged 6,000 between 2008 and 2020, representing about one-fifth of the NWT workforce. These jobs include seasonal, rotational, temporary, and special projects that fill employment gaps that are not met by the resident workforce.



Source: Statistics Canada and NWT Finance

Total aggregate earnings paid to non-resident workers ranged from \$261 million to \$440 million between 2008 and 2020, averaging about one-fifth of all employment income generated in the territory. Starting in 2018 there has been a decline in non-resident workers as a percentage of the total NWT workforce and as a percentage of total earnings. While employment income earned by non-residents represents lost income that could have been earned in the NWT economy by a resident worker, the NWT does benefit from these workers as many are in jobs that would otherwise be left unfilled.

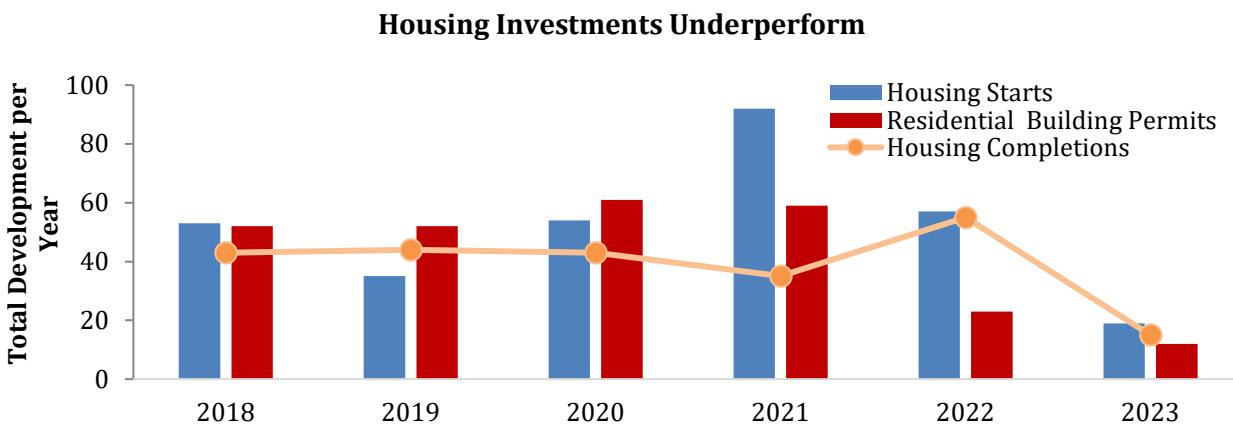


Source: Statistics Canada and NWT Bureau of Statistics

Risks to the Outlook – *Housing Market Imbalances*

Housing market imbalances are a significant and chronic challenge facing the NWT. Strong demand for homes (including market rentals, resales, new builds, and public housing) has not been matched by adequate supply for many years. As a result, every NWT community faces some type of housing shortage with residents unable to find adequate accommodation. Despite strong demand, residential construction to increase the housing stock has been meager.

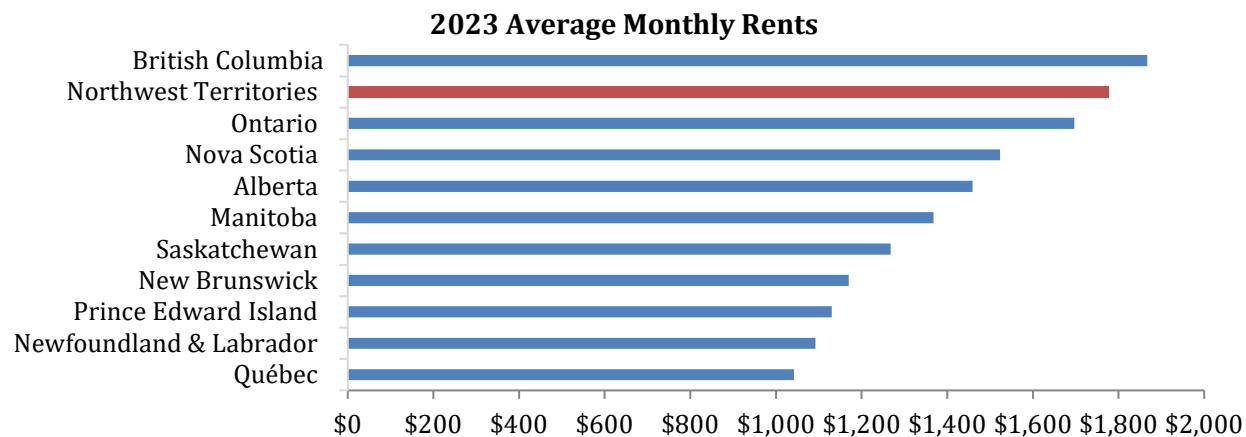
New home construction experienced a particularly bad year in 2023 due to a combination of high interest rates, increased labour and supply costs, a lack of skilled trades workers, and a shortened construction season due to wildfires and evacuations. In 2023, there were 12 residential building permits issued for new units declined, 19 housing starts, and only 15 housing completions.



Source: Statistics Canada

A lack of housing poses a severe risk to the outlook as it limits population growth and worsens ongoing labour shortages as potential employees looking to relocate to the NWT for work must struggle to find accommodation. A tight housing market with limited supply also pushes up home

prices and rental costs, which in turn add to the already high cost of living. In 2023, the average monthly rent in Yellowknife was \$1,776, the second highest of all reporting jurisdictions (with populations over 10,000) after British Columbia.

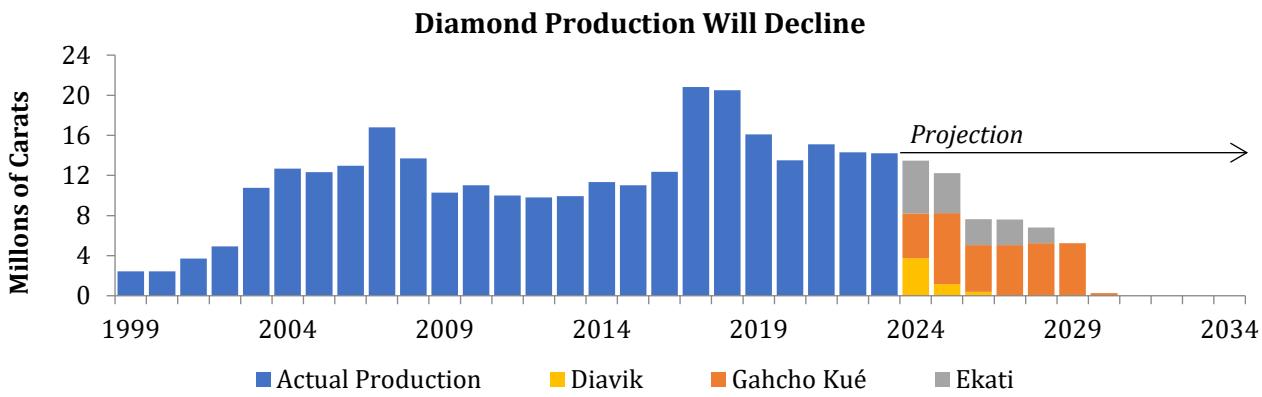


Note: Rents are calculated for communities with populations 10,000 and over.

Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation

Risks to the Outlook – *Diamond Mine Closures*

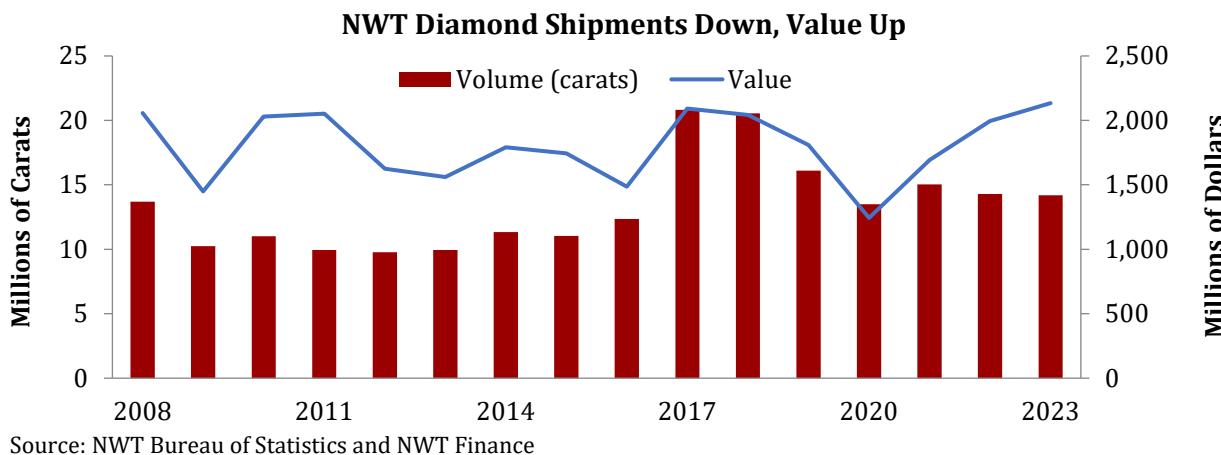
Maturing diamond mines are a significant risk to the economic outlook of the NWT. Diamond mining is a primary driver of the NWT economy but all currently producing mines are set to end production by 2030. Diavik is scheduled to close in 2026, followed by the Ekati in 2029 and Gahcho Kué in 2030. Ekati could operate for an additional decade if underwater mining is successful and the Sable Deep, Fox Deep, and Point Lake Deep kimberlite expansions go ahead. Decisions to expand existing diamond mines and develop new kimberlite pipes depend on a range of economic and financial factors including global capital credit conditions, consumer demand, and rough diamond prices. An extension of Ekati's mine life would be a significant positive development for the territory.



Note: Projection numbers are subject to change based on mine plan revisions by private mining companies.

Source: mining plans and technical reports, Natural Resources Canada, and NWT Finance

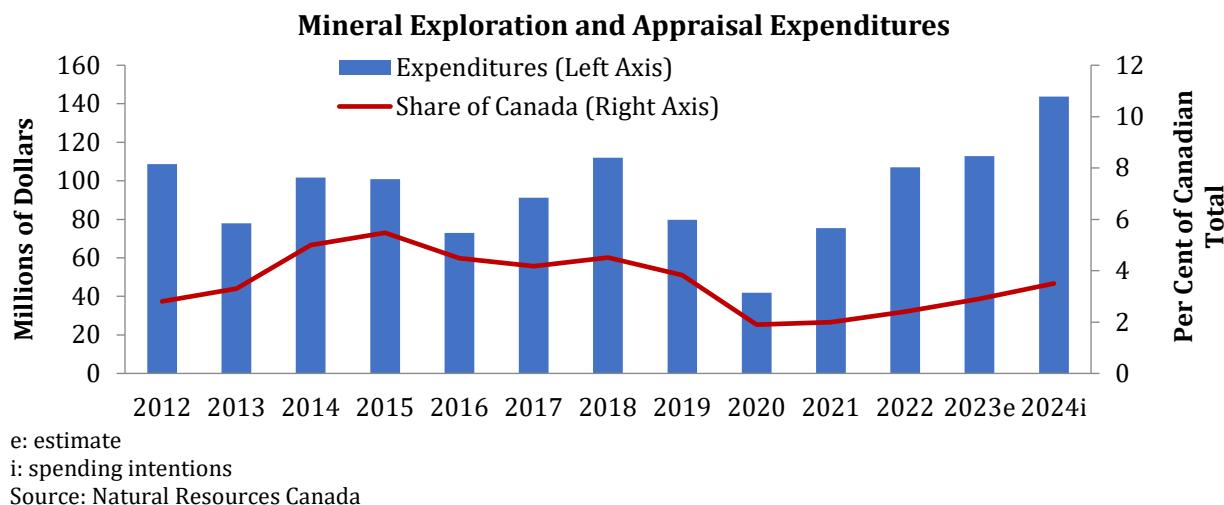
Although the diamond mines are reaching end of life, they are still extracting rough stones and continue to operate. In 2023, NWT diamond shipments were valued at \$2.1 billion, a 6.9 per cent increase from 2022, despite almost no change (0.7 per cent decrease) in total diamond shipment volume. Continued mining operation represents an upside risk to the outlook as it would boost NWT export values, resource royalties, and may encourage investment.



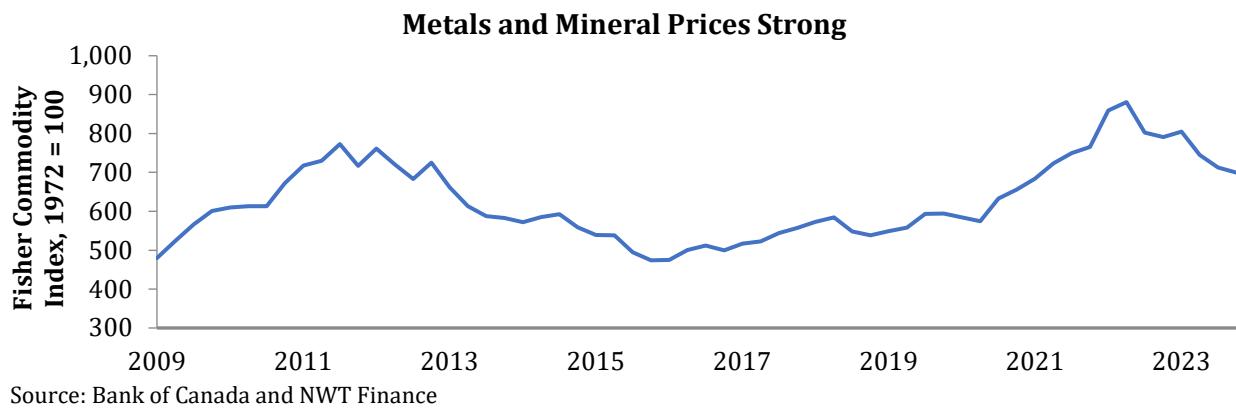
Risks to the Outlook – *Exploration and Future Mine Development*

Diamond mines currently dominate the mining industry and the private sector. However, several new mines and resource development projects exist in the territory and, while none are large enough to offset the economic loss that will accompany the closure of the diamond mines, they do present an opportunity for future mining growth. The Prairie Creek mine and the proposed Pine Point lead/zinc mine are examples of smaller-scale mining potential in the territory.

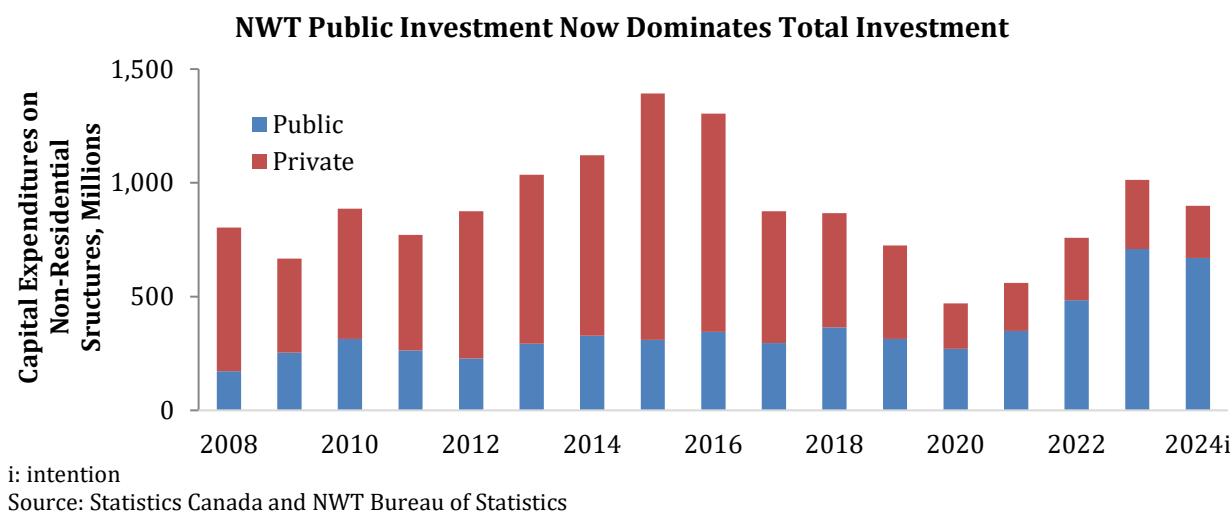
Further evidence of this potential is indicated by mineral exploration and appraisal spending, a requirement for discovering and developing new mines, and that has increased every year since the pandemic, rising to \$112.9 million in 2023, the highest level of exploration investment since 2008. In past years roughly one-half of all NWT exploration and appraisal expenditures were for diamonds but since 2021 diamond exploration has declined to less than one-fifth of spending intentions. Exploration and appraisal spending intentions are expected increase to \$143.7 million in 2024. The 2023 and 2024 expenditure increases come from renewed demand for critical minerals and metals that may result in new mine developments in the NWT.



Global prices for resource commodities, including prices for many metals and minerals found in the NWT, softened in 2023 but remain elevated. Higher commodity prices for many of the metals and minerals found in the NWT, such as gold, zinc, copper and silver, present an upside risk to the economic outlook because they make profits for mining companies more certain, which encourages investment in exploration and helps secure financing for projects already identified.



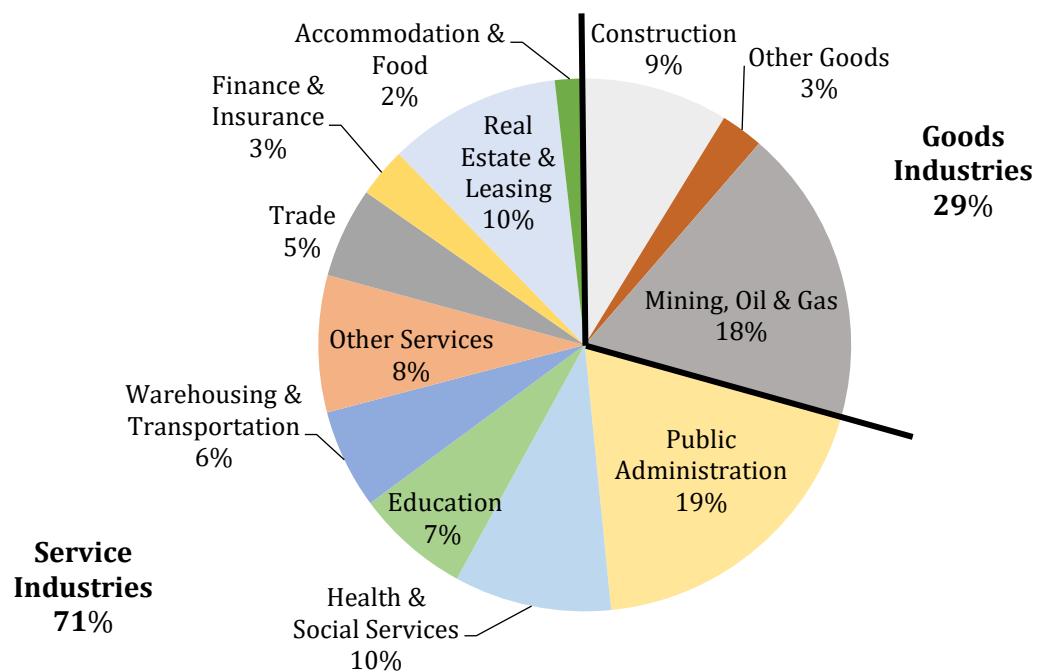
Public investment now represents 75 per cent of total investment, an increase from 30 per cent in 2014. Over the past decade, private investment has been falling due to fewer new large-scale industrial developments in the territory. Should new large-scale mining or construction projects occur, the ratio will shift back towards the private sector. This is because private sector investment in the NWT tends to be “lumpy,” where large investments are made when breaking ground on new developments like mines and then decrease rapidly when initial construction is complete.



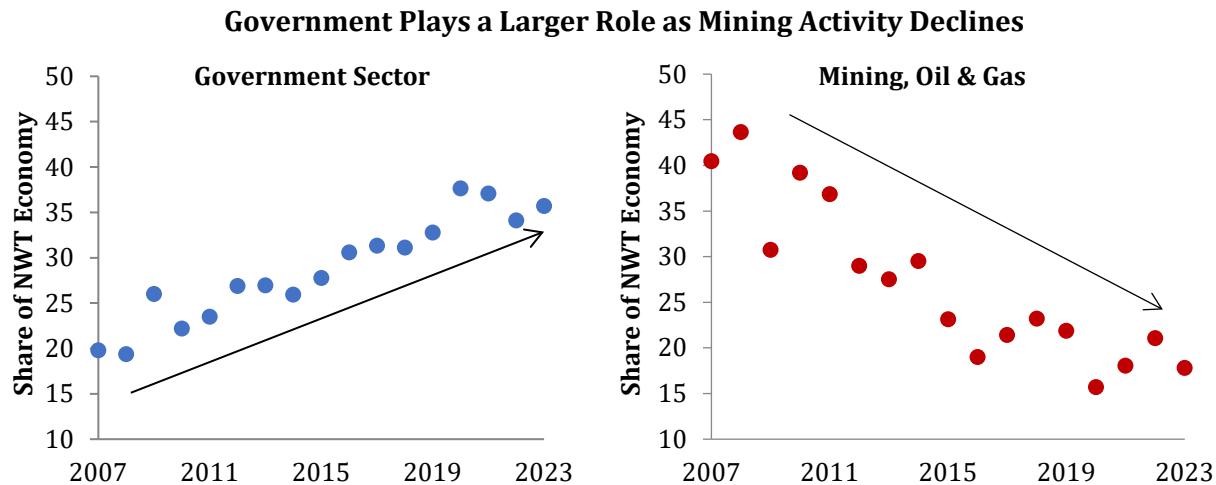
Risks to the Outlook – *Undiversified Economy*

The NWT economy relies on just two industries: government and mining. These two industries are the largest contributors to the territory's economic output and high-paying employment, collectively generating nearly 40 per cent of both real GDP and jobs. This outsized reliance on two industries creates structural barriers to long-term growth and stability. This is because economic diversity provides for stable and balanced growth by spreading risk evenly across several industries, thereby reducing the sensitivity of the economy to the "ups and downs" associated with any single industry, market, or region. More overall variety in economic activity generates employment opportunities and helps spur entrepreneurship and innovation.

Real GDP dominated by Government and Mining, 2023



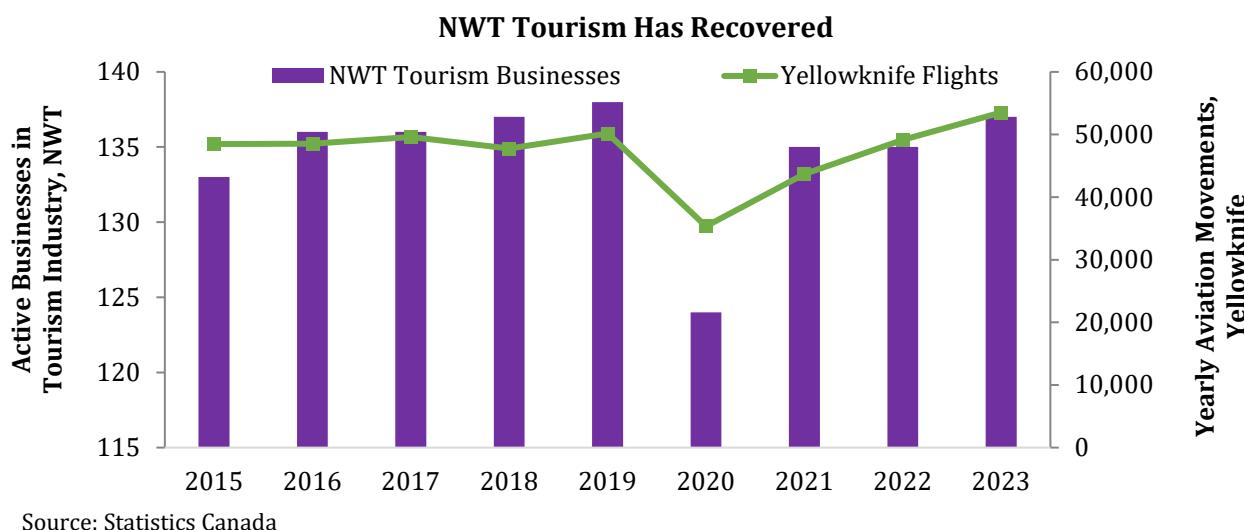
As the non-renewable resource extraction sector declines, government and the public sector play a larger role in the economy. This poses both a positive and negative risk to the outlook. While government will provide economic stability during near-term economic shocks, a high reliance on the public sector could stifle private sector growth and innovation, which is already limited in the territory.



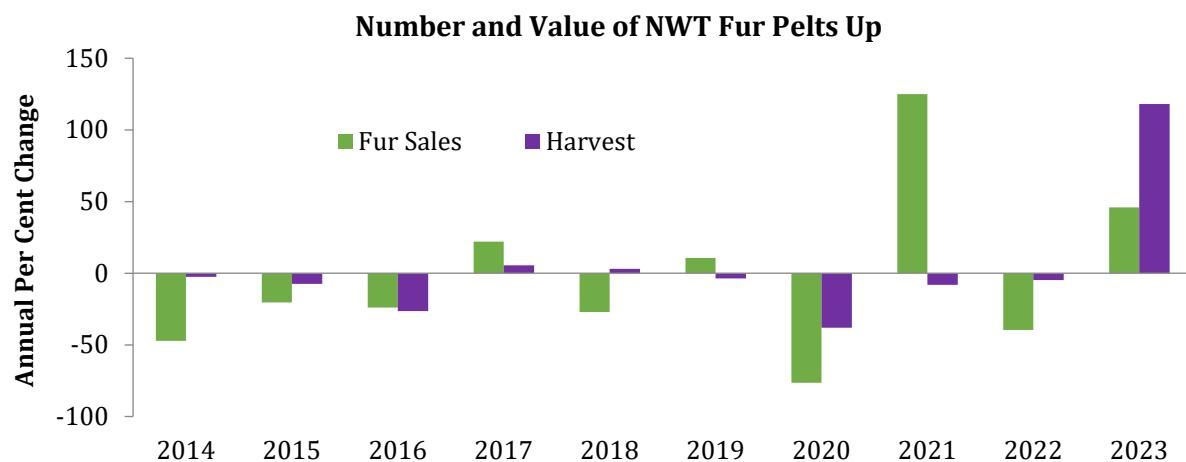
Risks to the Outlook – *Rebound in Growth Sectors*

Although attempts to diversify the economy away from mining and public administration have largely failed, there have been some positive surprises in small growth sectors.

Tourism has been highlighted as a growth sector with potential to inject private sector employment opportunities into smaller communities. While three years of pandemic related policies had a damaging effect on NWT tourism, the sector has largely recovered. Aircraft movement data, used as a proxy to measure out-of-territory tourist activity, suggests a good recovery, as does a rebound in the number of tourism-related businesses. In 2023, just over 53,500 separate aircraft movements occurred in Yellowknife, comparable to 2014 to 2019 levels, and the number of active businesses in the NWT tourism sector averaged 137, up from 124 in 2020.

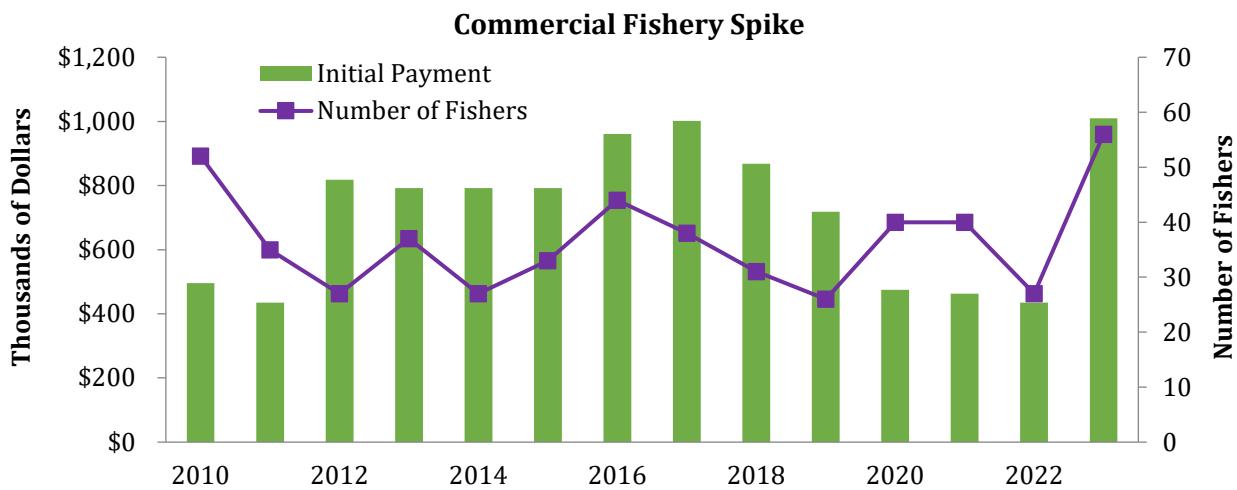


Trapping is another growth sector that, while a small contributor to the overall NWT economy, is traditionally important to many NWT residents for food and clothing as well as incomes, especially in smaller communities. There was a major rebound in trapping in 2023, with the number of fur pelts harvested rising to roughly 21,400 pelts, a 118 per cent increase from 2022. Of these pelts, 40 per cent were sold at auction for a value of \$343,000, a 46 per cent increase from 2022. This presents a positive risk to the outlook as it indicates a resurgence in a traditional activity and could mean increased employment and incomes in communities outside Yellowknife.



The commercial fishery industry in the NWT is small but represents an opportunity for NWT economic diversification and regional employment because fish are an abundant, renewable resource. The GNWT has made several commercial fishing investments as identified in the *Strategy*

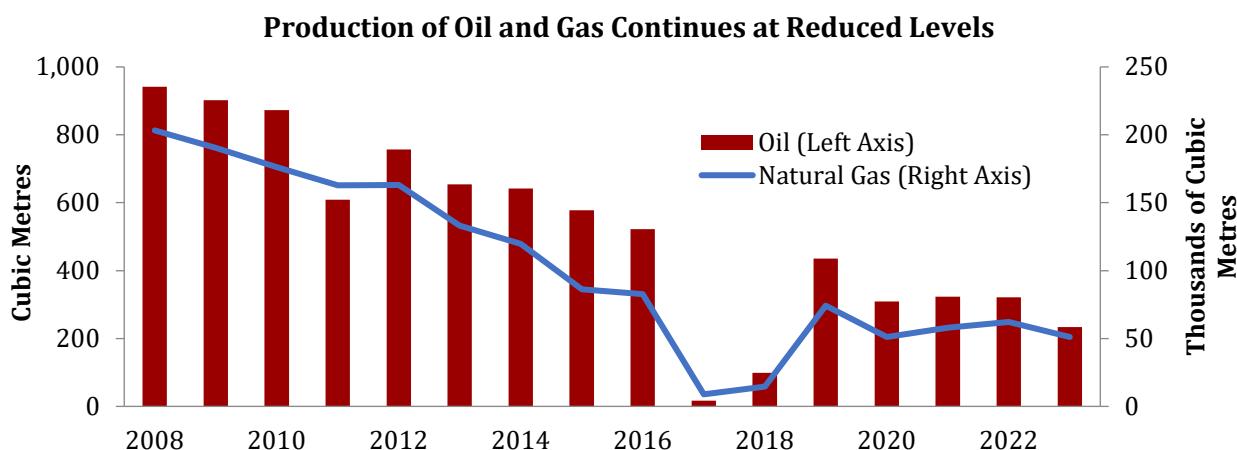
for Revitalizing the Great Slave Lake Commercial Fishery. Key among these is the new fish processing plant in Hay River which opened in June 2023. These investments appear to be working. Following five years of decline, initial payments (an on-delivery point, net-of-freight basis) to NWT fishers exporting through the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation (FFMC) increased by 132 per cent in 2023 to just over \$1 million. Similarly, the number of active commercial fishers exporting fish through the FFMC rose to 56, the highest number of commercial fishers since 2006. This increase was partly due to the lack of disrupted trade from previous years and from higher fish prices which led to increased participation and production. This spike in payment and total fishers can be seen as a positive risk, as continued higher levels would indicate that the fishing industry in the NWT is expanding however, more annual data is required for more complete analysis.



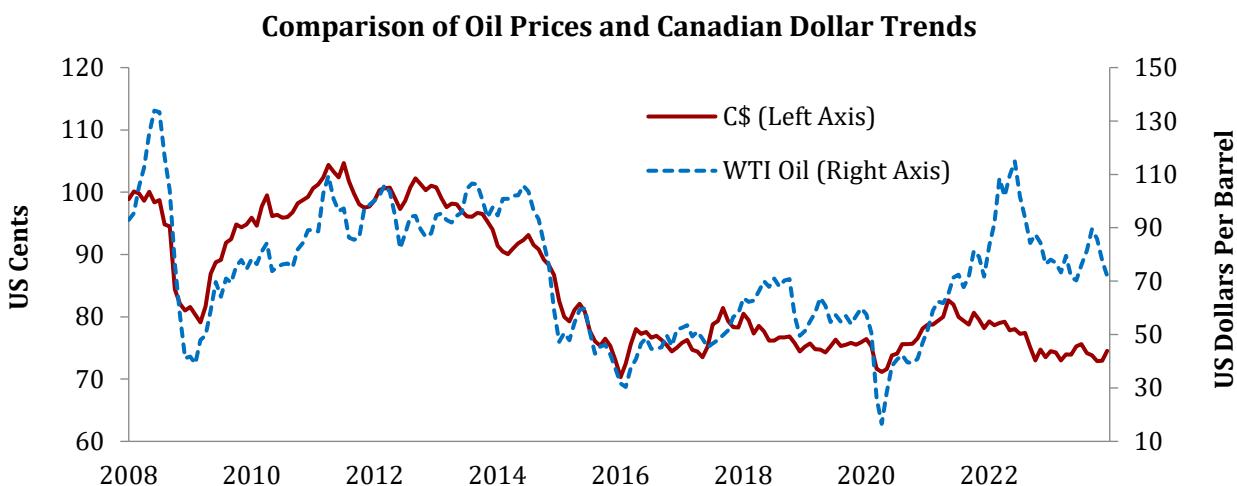
Source: Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation

Risks to the Outlook – *Global Prices and Currencies*

The benchmark West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude oil price fluctuated around US\$80 per barrel in 2023, a decline from 2022 but still above prices seen in 2015-2021. Elevated oil prices are both a negative and positive risk to the NWT economic outlook. High oil prices could dampen economic growth due to increased heating and transportation costs that contribute to higher operating costs for NWT business and a higher cost of living for NWT residents. High oil and natural gas prices could encourage increased NWT oil and natural gas production and higher export values. Between 2019 and 2023 annual NWT oil and natural gas production averaged 325 million cubic metres and 59 million cubic metres, respectively. Despite steady output, oil and gas production is declining.



Oil prices and the Canadian dollar used to move in lock-step but beginning mid-2021 WTI and the dollar have diverged, and the value of the Canadian dollar remains low, despite persistent elevated oil prices. The value of the Canadian dollar against its US counterpart has a direct effect on the health of the NWT economy because most goods and services bought and sold internationally are paid for in US dollars. The lower Canadian dollar presents an upside and downside risk to the economic outlook. A low Canadian dollar means that NWT businesses that export their production internationally will get paid more for their products after the payments are converted into Canadian dollars, which will help NWT resource companies that compete globally. However, a lower Canadian dollar will also make machinery and equipment imported from outside the territory more expensive, straining many NWT businesses. In addition, the low Canadian dollar has boosted the cost of imported food and other goods, having a negative impact on many NWT households.



Source: The Bank of Canada and US Energy Information Administration

Fiscal Review 2024-25

Budget 2024-25 is the first budget of the 20th Assembly and sets the stage to deliver on the Assembly's vision for a territory where people are supported in how they want to live, work and grow in a manner that prioritizes reconciliation and the well-being and prosperity of residents. The Assembly's top priorities towards achieving this vision are to encourage suitable, accessible and affordable housing, build a strong economic foundation, support access to health care and address the effects of trauma, and provide a safe space for residents and communities.

The Assembly's priorities can only be achieved through strong fiscal governance. The 2024-25 budget is step one in the Government of the Northwest Territories' (GNWT or Government) efforts to protect the ability to deliver on Assembly priorities and continue to provide core government programs, while making strategic infrastructure investments needed to support these programs.

Fiscal Sustainability Strategy

In February 2024, before developing Budget 2024-25, the GNWT released *Restoring Balance: A Fiscal Sustainability Strategy for the 20th Legislative Assembly*. The purpose of the fiscal strategy is to guide the territory to real fiscal improvement.

The fiscal sustainability strategy was created to address the high growth rate in the GNWT's expenditure base and rising debt levels. Spending growth in the health care system comes from the rising costs seen nationally as well as unique challenges in delivering health care in the territory. Climate change has contributed to frequent natural disasters, adding emergency and disaster assistance costs that are needed immediately, while the delay in federal disaster relief assistance creates a spike in expenses and a corresponding increase in short-term debt. Inflationary pressures have increased fuel and material costs for GNWT construction and operations and to third parties such as non-governmental organizations, local housing organizations, and public agencies. GNWT costs have also increased because the Government subsidizes the Marine Transportation Services and Northwest Territories Power Corporation for their additional costs due to low water levels so that rates do not have to increase for consumers.

The main objective of *Restoring Balance* is to return the GNWT to fiscal sustainability by increasing operating surpluses, reducing short-term debt, realigning health spending to make the programs more sustainable, allocating funding to priorities, and increasing fiscal capacity to ensure the GNWT can respond to future shocks.

The fiscal sustainability strategy includes the following targets to improve the GNWT's finances:

- operating surpluses must be large enough to:
 - repay a minimum of \$150 million in short-term debt by March 31, 2028, and
 - fund 100 per cent of capital projects from operating surpluses (the *Fiscal Responsibility Policy* requires a minimum of 50 per cent);
- annual supplementary reserves must be held to \$35 million, which means that departments will be asked to find budget overruns within existing budgets; and,
- annual forced growth and new initiatives must be held to \$10 million.

The GNWT is committed to increasing its fiscal capacity to ensure its capability of handling unexpected spending from natural disasters and one-time disruptions. The four-year business plans released at the same time as the 2024-25 Budget include fiscal strategy actions and are the operational plans for government spending during this Assembly. While fiscal circumstances may require adjustments in department spending to be included in the annual department budget plan updates, the over-arching four-year business plan provides the framework for successful compliance with the fiscal strategy. As well, large capital spending will continue to be capped at \$260 million annually.

The GNWT plans to meet the fiscal strategy targets by:

- increasing operating budget surpluses through a combination of new revenue generation and expenditure management by leveraging operating efficiencies,
- reducing the GNWT's short-term debt,
- realigning operating spending for health programs and services to make programs sustainable,
- addressing the costs incurred by the GNWT for Northwest Territories Power Corporation and Marine Transport Services relating to low water levels,
- allocating government spending appropriately to the priorities of Northwest Territories' residents,
- ensuring the GNWT is achieving value for money in the delivery of its programs and services, and
- increasing fiscal capacity to ensure that the GNWT can continue to respond to expenditure shocks such as natural disasters and economic disruptions.

Program evaluations under the *Government Renewal Initiative* will continue throughout this Assembly to ensure the GNWT is getting value for dollars spent on programs and services.

The *Restoring Balance* strategy aligns with the *Fiscal Responsibility Policy (Policy)*. The *Policy* establishes guidelines for debt management and guides the approach used to develop the fiscal

strategy to help ensure that government borrowing is sustainable. The *Policy*'s guidelines prevent the GNWT from borrowing to fund day-to-day operations. Expenditures are managed so that operating cash surpluses are generated to fund at least 50 per cent of the Government's infrastructure investments. Fiscal shocks may cause the GNWT to not meet the minimum budgeted 50 per cent threshold on an actual basis but the GNWT has two years to make up the shortfall. If the total servicing payments remain below five per cent of total revenues and total debt is at least \$120 million below the \$1.8 billion federally imposed borrowing limit, borrowing is affordable under the *Policy*.

Fiscal Situation and Medium-Term Outlook

The 2024-25 budget includes the first steps to achieve the fiscal strategy targets with actions that total \$100 million towards the 2024-25 fiscal sustainability goal of \$150 million. The targets originally set for 2024-25 will not be achieved in the 2024-25 budget and departments must find a combination of \$65 million less in spending or new revenues in 2025-26 to achieve the goal of reducing short-term debt by \$150 million over the life of the 20th Assembly.

Revenues are projected to increase for the first two years of the outlook followed by two years of slight decline caused by the Diavik mine closure and slower growth in Territorial Formula Financing resulting from relatively low territorial population growth compared to Canada. Revenue growth is expected to average an annual increase of 0.7 per cent from 2024-25 to 2027-28.

Over the same period, expenditures are expected to increase at an average annual rate of 3.1 per cent, which does not achieve the fiscal strategy objective of limiting expenditure growth below revenue growth. The narrowing gap between revenues and spending implies a shrinking operating surplus. Therefore, although the forecast projects a 3.2 per cent annual average decrease in total debt and a growing capacity to borrow throughout the outlook, the fiscal strategy target for a \$150 million reduction in short-term borrowing will not be met by the end of 2027-28. The Government will need more revenues, savings or efficiencies to meet its fiscal sustainability strategy targets.

The fiscal projections in the medium-term outlook comply with the *Fiscal Responsibility Policy*. Although the projected 2023-24 deficit is not in compliance, the *Policy* allows for two years to return to compliance. The budgeted 2024-25 operating cash surplus is large enough to cover the 2024-25 capital plan and the \$149-million shortfall projected for 2023-24, bringing the GNWT within the parameters of the *Policy* for infrastructure financing.

Debt servicing payments as a share of total revenue is expected to be under five per cent throughout the outlook, indicating debt affordability. With the forecasted decreasing debt load, the GNWT is forecast to remain onside with the *Policy*'s requirement for a \$120-million debt cushion under the borrowing limit and the borrowing capacity below the cushion is expected to increase from \$15 million in 2023-24 to \$214 million by the end of the outlook.

Medium-Term Outlook (May 2024 Forecast)

(Millions of dollars)	2023-24 Projected	2024-25 Main Est.	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
Total Revenue	2,581	2,633	2,704	2,690	2,688
Operating Expenditures	2,732	2,339	2,387	2,495	2,565
Operating Surplus/(Deficit)	(150)	293	316	195	123
Capital Investment	267	218	216	213	200
Total Debt at March 31					
Short-Term Debt	685	651	620	584	565
Long-Term and Guaranteed Debt	980	965	935	918	901
Total Debt	1,665	1,616	1,555	1,502	1,466
Borrowing Limit	1,800	1,800	1,800	1,800	1,800
FRP Borrowing Limit Trigger	120	120	120	120	120
Available Borrowing Capacity	15	64	125	178	214
FRP Requirements	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
1) Infrastructure Financing (Provision 3)					
Minimum Operating Surplus	133	109	108	106	100
Surplus plus Amortization	(15)	434	462	345	276
Coverage (Shortfall) in Cash Generated by Operations	(149)	325	355	238	176
In-Year Compliance (minimum surplus for capital)	No		Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Shortfall Coverage for non-compliance</i>		176			
2-Year Compliance		Yes			
2) Affordable Debt (Provision 5)					
Debt Service (% of revenue)	2.0%	2.0%	1.9%	2.0%	2.0%
Compliance (maximum 5%)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3) \$120-Million Debt Cushion (Provision 5)					
Total Debt	1,665	1,616	1,555	1,502	1,466
Borrowing Limit	1,800	1,800	1,800	1,800	1,800
Debt Cushion	120	120	120	120	120
Available Borrowing Capacity	15	64	125	178	214
Compliance (Available borrowing capacity)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Notes: FRP is *Fiscal Responsibility Policy*. Totals may not add due to rounding.

Fiscal Review

2022-23 Final Results

The GNWT ended 2022-23 with a \$122-million operating surplus, which was \$73 million higher than 2021-22. Total 2022-23 debt was \$1.4 billion, 11.4 per cent higher than the previous year.

Total GNWT non-consolidated revenues were \$2.4 billion in 2022-23, an increase of \$146 million or 6.5 per cent from 2021-22. The main revenue increases were \$39 million from Territorial Formula Financing, \$101 million from other federal transfers, \$24 million in corporate income tax and \$4 million in carbon tax revenue due to the annual rate increase. Personal income tax revenue decreased \$5 million, non-renewable resource revenues decreased \$4 million and general revenues decreased \$15 million.

Total department expenditures for 2022-23 were \$2.2 billion, up 4.0 per cent compared to 2021-22. The Department of Health and Social Services made up the largest portion of departmental spending at \$634 million, or 29 per cent, followed by the Department Education, Culture and Employment at 17 per cent. The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs had the largest increase from 2021-22 at \$33 million, or 22.6 per cent, driven by emergency spending for 2022 flooding.

2023-24 Revised Estimates

An operating deficit of \$150 million is projected for the revised estimates of 2023-24, a decrease of \$332 million from the budget operating surplus projection of \$182 million. Revenues for 2023-24 are projected to be \$2.58 billion and departmental expenditures are estimated to be \$2.59 billion. Debt is expected to be \$1.67 billion by March 31, 2024, which is within the *Fiscal Responsibility Policy* requirement of \$120 million buffer below the federally-imposed borrowing limit.

Revenue is estimated to have increased \$96 million from the 2023-24 budget. This is mainly due to federal disaster assistance, with transfers outside the Territorial Formula Financing grant increasing \$101 million from budget. The Territorial Formula Financing grant is unchanged from its initial projection. Taxation revenues increased \$39 million from budget, driven by a projected increase in corporate income tax revenue of \$37 million, with personal income tax estimated to increase \$6 million and the carbon tax forecast to be close to its budget projection, up \$800,000 or 1.3 per cent. Resource revenues are expected to have decreased \$43 million from budget.

Operating spending for 2023-24 is projected to have increased \$386 million, or 17.5 per cent, from budget estimates and increased largely due to wildfires and flooding. The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, in charge of territorial emergency spending, is estimated to have increased its spending by \$105 million. The Department of Environment and Climate Change, responsible for forest management and fire suppression, is expected to have increased its spending \$116 million compared to budget.

Fiscal Impacts of the 2023 Wildfire and 2022 Flooding

The fiscal impacts for the 2023 wildfire and 2022 flooding events are estimated to be \$306 million. To date, the GNWT has received \$155 million in federal assistance. The \$150-million remainder represents immediate spending by the GNWT that is either reducing the operating balance or adding

to short-term debt, though disaster financial assistance will cover most eligible expenses when the costs are finalized.

- The estimated costs of the wildfire evacuation and recovery are \$198 million, with \$164 million in 2023-24 and \$33 million in 2024-25. The federal government has advanced \$84 million in financial aid.
- Costs for the 2022 flooding are estimated to be \$108 million in total, with \$71 million of federal support already received. Expenditures in 2022-23 were \$45 million and another \$63 million is approved for 2023-24.

The GNWT projects that financial assistance from the federal government will total \$299 million, covering 98 per cent of disaster costs. This assistance is administered under the federal support programs of Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements, which provides up to 90 per cent of eligible costs, and the Emergency Management Assistance Plan, which provides up to 100 per cent.

2024-25 Main Estimates

The 2024-25 Budget includes the first steps to achieve the fiscal strategy targets by reducing spending by \$48 million and increasing revenue initiatives by \$52 million. These actions total \$100 million towards the 2024-25 fiscal sustainability goal with the result that debt projections have improved by \$49 million compared to the 2023-24 revised estimates.

Total 2024-25 revenues are estimated to be \$2.6 billion and operating expenditures at \$2.2 billion, providing the GNWT a projected operating surplus of \$403 million before adjustments.

The operating surplus after adjustments is \$294 million. To meet the fiscal sustainability strategy target of reducing debt by \$150 million over the next four years, the 2024-25 operating surplus must pay for the capital plan of \$268 million. The operating surplus includes a \$35-million supplementary reserve to provide a cushion against fiscal shocks during the year that is only partially offset by an estimated \$5 million in appropriation lapses.

Total revenues are projected to increase \$51 million from the 2023-24 Revised Estimates largely due to increases of \$89 million from the Territorial Formula Financing grant, \$15 million in carbon tax revenues because of the \$15 a tonne of greenhouse gas emissions rate increase, \$13 million in non-renewable resource revenue, \$9 million from general revenue (permits, fees, interest, and miscellaneous other revenues), and \$8 million in total other tax revenue excluding corporate income tax revenue. Carbon tax revenue increases have offsetting expenditures to mitigate the effect of the carbon tax on the cost of living and economic competitiveness.

Revenue increases were offset by a projected \$60-million decline in other federal transfers and a forecasted \$21-million decrease in corporate income taxes. Operating transfers decreased \$70 million, with a \$35-million decrease for transfers to Municipal and Community Affairs and a \$30-million decrease for Infrastructure, and a \$10-million increase in capital transfers.

As part of the fiscal strategy, departments examined their budgets and proposed \$48 million in savings. Compared to last year's budget, total spending is estimated to increase \$24 million, or 1.1 per cent. Health and Social Services is budgeted to increase expenses by \$37 million, or 6.0 per cent, and Finance spending is estimated to have increased \$18 million, or 5.4 per cent, compared to last year's

Main Estimates. Municipal and Community Affairs is projected to decrease its spending \$29 million, or 15.8 per cent, compared to the 2023-24 budget in the absence of emergency spending.

The 2024-25 year-end debt projection is \$1.6 billion, \$49 million lower than projected for 2023-24. The remaining borrowing room between the 2024-25 debt projection and the \$1.8-billion federally imposed borrowing limit is \$184 million. The *Fiscal Responsibility Policy* requires total borrowing to be at least \$120 million below the limit, leaving projected remaining borrowing room of \$64 million.

2024-25 Budget Highlights

Revenue Initiatives

Budget 2024 introduces revenue-increasing measures to raise fiscal capacity, make programs cost neutral, continue indexing fees to inflation, and align the Northwest Territories carbon tax system with the federal benchmark.

Total revenues are expected to increase \$52 million in 2024-25 under fiscal strategy measures. This increase is temporary, as the 2025-26 projected revenue increase is \$35 million. For these two years, revenue from the Non-Insured Health Benefits program will be \$24 million annually and will expire thereafter. Starting in 2026-27, \$11 million for will be left for ongoing revenue increases spread through almost all Government departments, including Housing NWT.

Starting in July 2024, the Northwest Territories will receive vaping products excise tax revenues under the *Canada-Northwest Territories Coordinated Vaping Products Taxation Agreement* at the same rates as the federal tax rates. The proposed rates are \$1.12 per two millilitres or grams up to ten millilitres or grams and above that threshold the rate will be \$1.12 per ten millilitres or grams. These rates are subject to the federal government passing its 2024-25 budget; otherwise, both rates will be \$1.00. This new tax is projected to generate \$252,000 in 2024-25 and over \$300,000 annually thereafter.

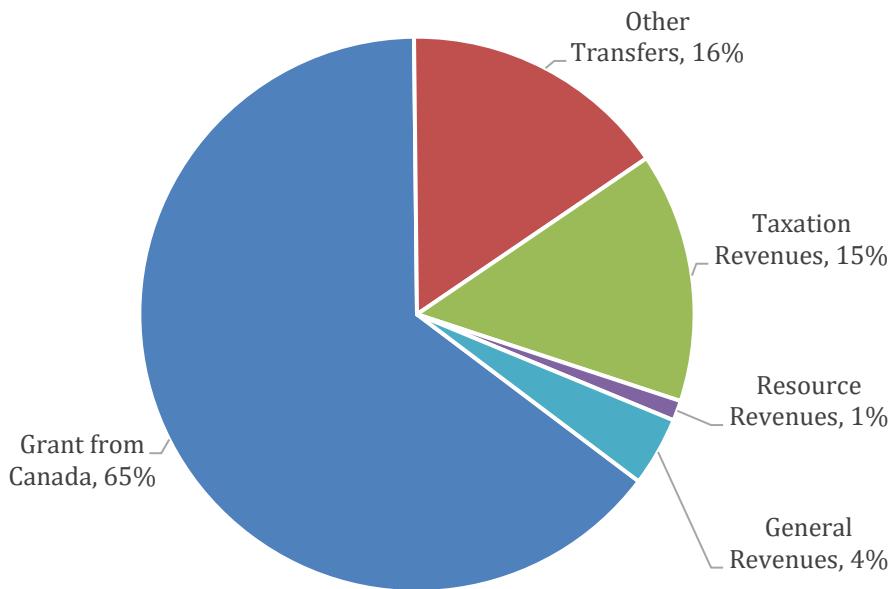
To eliminate the 9-1-1 service deficit, the 9-1-1 levy on telephone users will increase from \$1.70 to \$3.00 per month. The fee increase will raise an additional \$700,000 annually and is expected to make the 9-1-1 service cost neutral.

Property and education mill rates for 2024 will be increased by the Yellowknife Consumer Price Index. This is projected to generate \$875,000 to retain its real purchasing power.

The Northwest Territories carbon tax rate increased \$15 a carbon-equivalent tonne of greenhouse gas emissions to \$80 as of April 1, 2024. Aviation fuel and diesel fuel used to generate electricity for community distribution continues to be exempt from carbon tax. The carbon tax rate increase will generate an additional \$14.7 million in revenue, which is returned to residents, communities and industry through carbon tax offsets and used for projects to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Effective April 1, 2024, to March 31, 2027, the Northwest Territories carbon tax on diesel heating fuel deliveries for all but large emitters will be rebated at source. This decision was made following the federal government's October 2023 announcement to suspend the carbon tax on diesel heating fuel under its backstop carbon pricing system for three years.

Projected 2024-25 Revenues by Source



Operating Expenditure

Budget 2024 projects \$2.2 billion in departmental operating expenditures, an increase of 1.1 per cent compared to Budget 2023, or \$24 million.

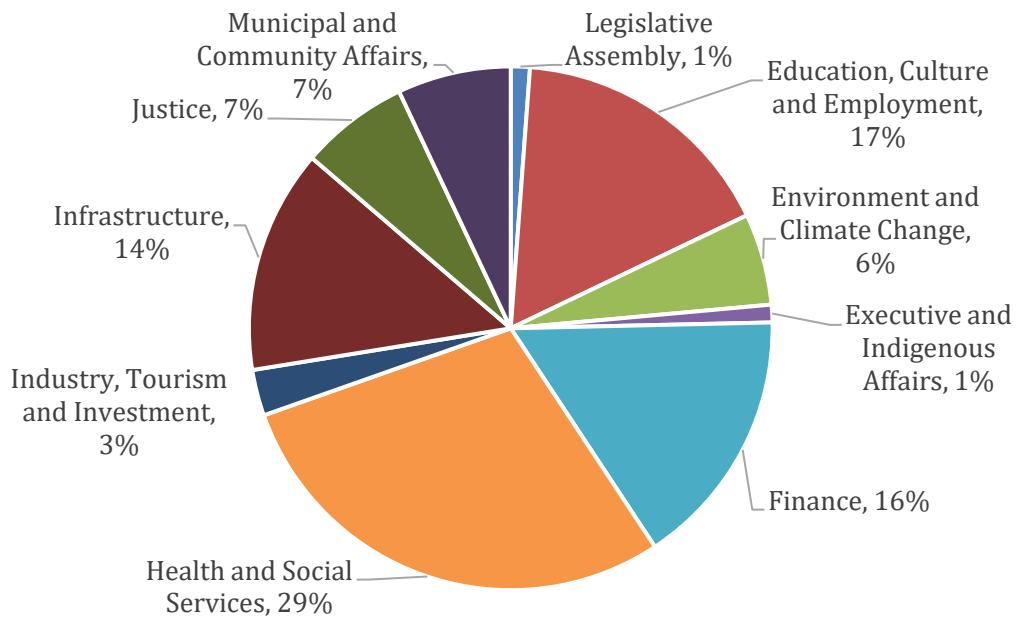
The 2024-25 operating expenditure budget is created by using the previous year's approved department budgets as the budget base. Expenditures for programs that are ending and other reductions are removed from the base and new funding for increased costs due to inflation or increased demand for programs or services are then added to each department's budget. Finally, new spending on initiatives is considered on a government-wide basis within the limits of the government's fiscal resources.

Projected department spending includes \$107.9 million in expiring programs and \$48.4 million in budget savings to help meet the *Restoring Balance* targets. These savings will mean the elimination of 91 positions, 35 of which are vacant. A total of 58 employees may be affected. The GNWT is working to redeploy these employees within the organization.

Spending is budgeted to increase \$23.7 million from the 2023-24 Main Estimates due to:

- \$41.6 million to address higher demand or higher costs for current programming that departments cannot manage within their existing budgets;
- \$7.7 million in new spending for initiatives and enhancements to existing programs, of which \$4.6 million is from new initiatives in 2024-25 and \$3.1 million is to fulfil commitments from previous initiatives;
- \$126.7 million under other approved adjustments; and
- \$3.9 million in amortization.

2024-25 Operating Expenditures by Department



The following provides a description of achievements of each department in response to the fiscal sustainability targets and spending on initiatives.

Legislative Assembly

The Legislative Assembly achieved a \$1.4-million decrease from the 2023-24 budget of \$26 million because of a \$2.4-million reduction for programs that expired at the end of 2023-24. This reduction was offset by \$478,000 to address inflationary pressures, \$141,000 for new intern positions, \$25,000 for an independent commission, and \$309,000 in other program adjustments.

Education, Culture and Employment

The 2024-25 budget for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment is \$375 million, a \$9.9 million decrease from the previous budget. To support the fiscal strategy, the Department achieved almost \$13 million in reduced spending and a further \$4.5 million for expiring programs. However, this reduction was offset by \$484,000 to address the higher costs associated with Aurora College and the Senior Citizens Supplementary Benefit and \$3 million in other adjustments.

The Department budget also includes the following new spending:

- \$2.6 million for the *Canada-NWT Early Learning and Child Care Agreement* to increase the affordability of the territorial childcare system and support improvements in the quality of the early childhood learning programs.
- \$3.8 million for a child and youth counselling program that was paid for by a budget transfer from the Department of Health and Social Services for a similar program and has no effect on the overall GNWT budget.

Environment and Climate Change

The 2024-25 budget for the Department of Environment and Climate Change is \$126 million, an increase of \$1.9 million from the 2023-24 budget. The Department reduced spending by \$5 million, had almost \$3 million in programs that ended and limited cost pressures to a \$7,000 increase for forest management personnel.

The Department does not have any new initiatives but added \$9.1 million in spending for third-party agreements including \$3.2 million in Natural Resources Canada funding to improve resilience to natural disaster.

Executive and Indigenous Affairs

The 2024-25 budget for the Department of Executive and Indigenous Affairs is \$24 million, a \$1.4 million increase from the 2023-24 budget. The Department was able to reduce spending by \$838,000 and was able to fund increased cost pressures from within the existing budget.

Increased Department spending includes:

- \$854,000 for Integrated Service Delivery program functions that are transferred from the Department of Justice with no effect on overall GNWT expenditures; and
- \$2.2 million for the implementation of the National Action Plan to End Gender Based Violence.

Finance

The 2024-25 Department of Finance budget is \$358 million, an \$18.4-million increase from the 2023-24 budget. Although the Department found \$9.3 million in reduced spending, it required additional spending including:

- \$2 million for increased costs to cover employee medical travel benefits, and
- \$30 million for a contribution to the Northwest Territories Power Corporation to address low water levels and support northern residents and businesses by not increasing power rates.

Health and Social Services

The 2024-25 budget for the Department of Health and Social Services is \$644 million, a \$36.5-million increase from the 2023-24 budget. The Department identified \$3.0 million in reductions and a further \$23.1 million in programs that expired in 2023-24. The Department also transferred \$3.8 million of its budget to the Department of Education, Culture and Employment.

The Department's budget included \$1.4 million in new initiative spending for the Transitional Housing Addictions Recovery Programs in Inuvik and Yellowknife that will be delivered in partnership with the Department of Infrastructure and Housing NWT.

Because reductions to the Department budget were not enough to address health spending cost pressures, the Department was provided with the following additional spending:

- \$28.3 million to address rising costs of existing programs and services, such as the out of territory supportive living program, hospital and physician services, in-territory child and family support, and other health related contracts and services; and
- \$34.1 million under other approved adjustments, including:
 - \$14.1 million for the Northern Wellness Agreement,
 - \$8.3 million for the Canada-Northwest Territories Agreement to work together to improve health care for Canadians,
 - \$2.4 million for the Canada-Northwest Territories Aging with Dignity agreement, and
 - \$9.3 million for other adjustments in health system investments, home and community care agreements, crisis hotlines responding to gender based violence, chronic disease surveillance and other systems funding.

Industry, Tourism and Investment

The Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment budget increased \$1.9 million from the 2023-24 budget to the \$63 million 2024-25 budget. The Department reduced spending with \$2.7 million in reductions and \$913,000 in expiring programs. This was offset by \$279,000 to address park contracts, maintenance and utilities cost pressures.

The Department budget included additional spending of \$3.3 million in approved adjustments, including \$2.4 million for Hay River fish plant operations.

The Department also has the following proposed initiatives to support the Assembly priorities:

- \$529,000 for the NWT Film Strategy to improve the competitiveness of the Northwest Territories film and media sector and support the sector's growth,
- \$521,000 to complete the *Mineral Resources Act* regulations for improved mineral rights governance and administration within existing co-management frameworks for land, water, and resources, and
- \$100,000 for the *Tourism 2025* investment strategy.

Infrastructure

The 2024-25 budget for the Department of Infrastructure is \$307 million, a \$320,000 increase from the 2023-24 budget achieved through \$7.7 million in spending reductions and \$6.6 million from programs that expired in 2023-24.

The spending reductions offset increased Department spending of \$4.0 million to support the rising costs of contracts, maintenance and utilities for territorial infrastructure and \$8.8 million in adjustments, including funding of \$6.9 million for Hay River harbour dredging.

The Department also has the following initiatives to support the Assembly priorities:

- \$433,000 for the Energy Action Plan,

- \$360,000 to support the 2030 Energy Strategy for developing the Zero Emission Vehicle Infrastructure Program and building the network of fast-charging stations for electric vehicles, and
- \$154,000 for the Transitional Housing Addictions Recovery Programs in Inuvik and Yellowknife in conjunction with the Department of Health and Social Services.

Justice

The 2024-25 budget for the Department of Justice is \$149 million, a \$3.8 million increase from the 2023-24 budget, which includes \$2.9 million in spending reductions and \$747,000 in expiring programs. The spending reductions were offset by \$1.9 million to address rising costs at Royal Canadian Mounted Police detachments and \$5.1 million in other spending including \$2.4 million for the expansion of First Nations and Inuit policing programs.

The proposed Department budget also includes \$270,000 to help meet its responsibilities to the public under the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

Municipal and Community Affairs

The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs 2024-25 budget is \$156 million, a \$29.4-million decrease from the 2023-24 budget. The Department found \$624,000 in savings, reduced spending by \$1.6 million under fiscal strategy measures, and had \$61.7 million removed for flooding in the prior budget because it was no longer required.

The Department budget includes a proposed \$29.5 million of approved spending adjustments, including \$29.0 million for the 2022 flood and 2023 wildfire response and recovery and \$4.2 million to address community government cost pressures in operations and maintenance, water and waster services and grants-in-lieu of property taxes.

The Department also has the following initiatives to support the Assembly priority for safe communities:

- \$332,000 for one indeterminate position and six relief positions for reliable staffing of 9-1-1 emergency calling.
- \$483,000 to improve emergency management, community fire protection, and communication with three new full-time positions for an Assistant Fire Marshal, Emergency Management Incident Command System Trainer, and Senior Communications and Planning Advisor.

Housing NWT

Housing NWT is a GNWT-funded agency that also receives revenues from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. The proposed 2024-25 GNWT contribution is \$76 million.

To support the fiscal strategy, Housing NWT identified \$2.4 million in reductions and has \$5 million in programs that ended in 2023-24, partially offset by \$230,000 in additional spending adjustments.

As part of the Assembly's housing priority, a proposed \$1.0 million will be provided to Housing NWT to satisfy the annual cost share requirements for the Canada-Northwest Territories Housing Benefit program over the next three years.

Capital Investment

The 2024-25 Capital Estimates were approved in October 2023. The capital budget includes \$347 million for the GNWT's infrastructure plans and \$13 million for Housing NWT for a total planned infrastructure investment of \$361 million.

Highlights of the 2024-25 Capital Estimates include:

- \$94 million for highways and roads.
- \$63 million for airports and runways.
- \$73 million for community government infrastructure.
- \$55 million for health care facilities, services and equipment.
- \$26 million for renewable energy.
- \$13 million for housing.
- \$6 million for technology.
- \$3 million for new education facilities and renovations for existing facilities.

The 2024-25 Capital Estimates maintain a \$260-million limit on departmental capital spending to reflect the GNWT's ability and the economy's capacity to supply necessary labour and material to complete projects. This maximum does not include infrastructure contributions for community governments and funding for Housing NWT. Smaller capital projects and deferred capital maintenance budgets are not affected by the cap.

Borrowing Plan

The Legislative Assembly is required to approve an annual *Appropriation Act* to establish limits on GNWT debt for the following year. The borrowing plan projects total GNWT borrowing of \$1.261 billion at year-end and the requested borrowing amount is \$1.316 billion, which includes a \$50-million contingency amount to cover the possibility that spending requirements may require additional borrowing during the year and a \$5-million contingency for a real return bond.

The 2024-25 borrowing plan for the government reporting entity totals \$1.616 billion. This is a 2.9 per cent increase from the March 31, 2024 projection.

GNWT short-term debt is forecasted to decrease 4.9 per cent from the projected \$684 million at March 31, 2024 to \$650 million at March 31, 2025.

The forecast \$611 million in long-term debt is down \$9 million or 1.5 per cent. The majority of GNWT long-term debt consists of bonds and P3 debt for the Stanton Territorial Hospital, the Tłı̨chǫ Highway and the Mackenzie Valley Fibre Optic Link.

Borrowing Plan Summary (year ending March 31)

	(Millions of dollars)		<u>Change</u>	
	<u>2024</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>\$</u>
GNWT Debt	1,304	1,261	(3.3)	(43)
Short-term	684	650	(4.9)	(34)
Long-term	620	611	(1.5)	(9)
Bonds	365	363	(0.4)	(1)
P3	255	247	(3.1)	(8)
Other	0	0	(100.0)	(0)
Contingency	..	55
<i>Appropriation Act Limit</i>	<i>..</i>	<i>1,316</i>	<i>..</i>	<i>..</i>
Public Agencies	361	356	(1.5)	(6)
Total Consolidated	1,665	1,616	(2.9)	(49)

Risks to the Fiscal Outlook

GNWT fiscal risks include:

- *The NWT's economic dependence on resources* – Market conditions in the resource sector can fluctuate significantly and global price volatility can create uncertainty for GNWT resource revenues. When a mine stops operations GNWT own-source revenues decline directly because of the loss of the mine's royalty and tax revenues but also indirectly from reduced demand for goods, services and labour. Reduced economic activity also may cause the Northwest Territories' population to decrease, affecting the federal transfers that the GNWT receives. However, mineral exploration investments have recently increased and this may result in new resource projects opening as existing mining operations wind down.
- *Revenue volatility* – Corporate income tax has historically been the GNWT's most volatile own-source revenue although the Territorial Formula Financing Grant is responsive over time to such changes. Resource revenues are also volatile but their variability is not offset through Territorial Formula Financing. Resource revenues are sensitive to commodity price swings, exchange rate fluctuations, and operational decisions made by resource developers. The risk to the operating budget of large resource revenue shocks is largely neutralized by the GNWT's commitment not to spend resource revenues on operations, but rather only on contributions to the Heritage Fund, debt repayment and infrastructure. Furthermore, 62.5 per cent of resource revenues are shared with other governments, further reducing the revenue risk to the GNWT fiscal framework.
- *Slow revenue growth* – Territorial Formula Financing is on average 70 per cent of total revenues, affording considerable year-to-year revenue stability but also dominating revenue growth. An underdeveloped private sector limits the ability to raise own-source revenue through tax changes. Growth in Territorial Formula Financing relies on provincial/local government spending and population growth relative to Canada. The combination of provincial and local government spending forecasts and predicted slow Northwest Territories population growth relative to Canada is expected to reduce long-term growth in the Territorial Formula Financing Grant to an annual average of two per cent. The slow revenue growth will require careful expenditure management.

- *Ongoing operating expenditure pressures* – Constant pressure exists to enhance current programs and to implement initiatives while not reducing existing program and service expenditures. Operating spending has grown over time through a combination of initiatives, adjustments to enhance or improve programs, and forced increases based on higher costs and demand for services. The GNWT is actively mitigating this risk through the fiscal sustainability strategy Restoring Balance. The task of reducing expenditures and finding value and efficiency will continue throughout the 20th Assembly's term.
- *Unexpected expenditures and capital project cost overruns* – Typical operating expenditure shocks are extraordinary fire suppression needs, flooding, and other natural disasters. All provinces and territories benefit from federal disaster assistance for natural catastrophes, though costs incurred are immediate and assistance follows in later years, increasing short-term borrowing until the aid is received. The GNWT limits the annual large capital budget to \$260 million to reduce the risk of large capital project cost overruns.
- *Debt Position and Financing* - The GNWT issues debt to partially finance its capital program and to meet short-term borrowing requirements. Debt has increased steadily since 2009-10, reflecting investments in capital projects to take advantage of cost-shared dollars under federal programs to develop the territory's infrastructure. The GNWT is currently near the federally imposed \$1.8-billion borrowing limit and another year of unexpectedly high costs could push the GNWT over the limit. The *Restoring Balance* fiscal strategy includes a target to reduce short-term borrowing by \$150 million over the next four years to reduce this risk. Increasing debt raises the following risks:
 - *Sustained high interest rates* – The current high interest rate environment has the largest effect on short-term debt, which comprises a large share of GNWT debt. Debt risk is considered low because debt servicing costs are expected to be less than five per cent of total revenues over the outlook. A relatively low overall debt burden provides protection against the risk of rising interest rates. However, as rates have risen substantially over the past two years and GNWT debt has increased through new issues, higher debt service payments have reduced funds available for programs, services, and infrastructure investment.
 - *Credit Rating* – A high credit rating leads to lower borrowing costs and less interest rate risk. The GNWT's high rating reflects fiscal sustainability to lenders. Institutional investors often have minimum credit rating restrictions on where they can invest.

Summary of Operations

(thousands of dollars)

	2022-2023 Actuals	2023-2024 Main Estimates	2023-2024 Revised Estimates	2024-2025 Main Estimates
REVENUES	2,408,393	2,484,891	2,581,190	2,632,584
OPERATIONS EXPENSE				
Compensation and Benefits	435,209	432,685	450,637	425,441
Grants, Contributions and Transfers	1,021,679	1,038,458	1,144,973	1,093,035
Amortization	125,253	131,899	131,899	135,761
Chargebacks	28,142	25,998	34,738	33,976
Computer Hardware and Software	9,798	7,896	8,129	7,691
Contract Services	271,174	307,194	438,332	270,560
Controllable Assets	2,938	3,062	3,074	2,911
Fees and Payments	169,547	126,489	205,594	126,250
Interest	37,251	27,263	45,263	27,263
Loss on Sale of Assets	41	-	-	-
Materials and Supplies	23,217	22,933	36,451	22,325
Purchased Services	18,355	18,258	20,460	17,615
Travel	17,694	16,552	19,323	16,115
Utilities	52,152	44,273	50,168	48,033
Valuation Allowances	4,783	3,193	3,193	2,833
TOTAL OPERATIONS EXPENSE TO BE VOTED	2,217,233	2,206,153	2,592,234	2,229,809
OPERATING SURPLUS (DEFICIT) PRIOR TO ADJUSTMENTS	191,160	278,738	(11,044)	402,775
Infrastructure Contributions	(67,208)	(64,948)	(137,065)	(77,080)
Deferred Maintenance	(2,232)	(1,800)	(1,967)	(1,800)
Supplementary Reserve	-	(35,000)	-	(35,000)
Estimated Appropriation Lapses	-	5,000	-	5,000
WORK PERFORMED ON BEHALF OF OTHERS				
Recoveries	48,719	40,617	73,318	54,576
Expenditures	(48,719)	(40,617)	(73,318)	(54,576)
OPERATING SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR	121,720	181,990	(150,076)	293,895
ACCUMULATED SURPLUS, BEGINNING OF YEAR	1,738,303	1,806,729	1,860,023	1,709,947
ACCUMULATED SURPLUS, END OF YEAR	1,860,023	1,988,719	1,709,947	2,003,842

Summary of Revenues

	(thousands of dollars)			
	2022-2023 Actuals	2023-2024 Main Estimates	2023-2024 Revised Estimates	2024-2025 Main Estimates
GRANT FROM CANADA	1,519,233	1,610,836	1,610,836	1,699,357
TRANSFER PAYMENTS	436,571	372,307	472,873	412,393
TAXATION REVENUE				
Personal Income Tax	128,570	117,887	124,297	127,848
Corporate Income Tax	48,468	39,611	76,775	55,609
Cannabis Excise Tax	978	1,040	1,038	1,090
Carbon Tax	16,299	62,723	63,523	78,249
Tobacco Tax	14,387	16,354	14,080	14,635
Vapour Products Tax	-	-	-	252
Fuel Tax	20,450	20,083	19,500	20,486
Payroll Tax	47,522	50,131	49,850	50,847
Property Taxes and School Levies	27,012	29,247	27,483	28,843
Insurance Premium Taxes	6,834	5,500	5,500	5,610
	310,520	342,576	382,046	383,469
Non-renewable Resource Revenue				
Licences, Rental and Other Fees	2,576	4,016	4,016	4,001
Minerals, Oil and Gas Royalties	35,356	56,868	13,421	26,801
Quarry Fees	105	205	205	205
	38,037	61,089	17,642	31,007
GENERAL REVENUES				
Revolving Funds Net Revenue	26,190	26,770	24,088	24,628
Regulatory Revenues	28,886	25,303	26,126	28,507
Interest	310	340	340	340
Investment Income	4,869	1,379	1,379	1,788
Lease	4,727	4,622	4,622	4,722
Program	25,889	26,738	26,865	25,956
Grants	73	-	-	-
Service and Miscellaneous	4,085	9,931	11,373	17,417
Recovery of Prior Years' Expenditures	9,003	3,000	3,000	3,000
	104,032	98,083	97,793	106,358
TOTAL REVENUES	2,408,393	2,484,891	2,581,190	2,632,584

Summary of Operations Expenditures

(thousands of dollars)

	2022-2023 Actuals	2023-2024 Main Estimates	2023-2024 Revised Estimates	2024-2025 Main Estimates
Department				
Legislative Assembly	25,302	27,655	27,681	26,275
Education, Culture and Employment	374,617	384,847	392,633	374,989
Environment and Climate Change	130,445	124,309	240,103	126,205
Executive and Indigenous Affairs	22,548	22,848	25,566	24,253
Finance	334,122	340,042	389,876	358,407
Health and Social Services	634,713	607,709	671,625	644,228
Industry, Tourism and Investment	60,651	61,476	65,929	63,392
Infrastructure	306,176	306,827	337,777	307,147
Justice	145,998	144,759	150,466	148,586
Municipal and Community Affairs	182,661	185,681	290,578	156,327
	2,217,233	2,206,153	2,592,234	2,229,809
Expenditure Category				
Compensation and Benefits	435,209	432,685	450,637	425,441
Grants, Contributions and Transfers	1,021,679	1,038,458	1,144,973	1,093,035
Amortization	125,253	131,899	131,899	135,761
Chargebacks	28,142	25,998	34,738	33,976
Computer Hardware and Software	9,798	7,896	8,129	7,691
Contract Services	271,174	307,194	438,332	270,560
Controllable Assets	2,938	3,062	3,074	2,911
Fees and Payments	169,547	126,489	205,594	126,250
Interest	37,251	27,263	45,263	27,263
Loss on Sale of Assets	41	-	-	-
Materials and Supplies	23,217	22,933	36,451	22,325
Purchased Services	18,355	18,258	20,460	17,615
Travel	17,694	16,552	19,323	16,115
Utilities	52,152	44,273	50,168	48,033
Valuation Allowances	4,783	3,193	3,193	2,833
	2,217,233	2,206,153	2,592,234	2,229,809

Summary of Infrastructure Investment

(thousands of dollars)

	2022-2023 Actuals	2023-2024 Capital Estimates	2023-2024 Revised Estimates	2024-2025 Capital Estimates
Tangible Capital Assets				
Legislative Assembly	514	200	259	105
Education, Culture and Employment	9,939	5,623	20,782	3,590
Environment and Climate Change	3,012	2,297	8,501	21,078
Finance	30,895	16,118	27,450	3,847
Health and Social Services	36,721	35,904	55,221	56,997
Industry, Tourism and Investment	12,306	3,078	10,579	4,428
Infrastructure	124,155	160,814	193,157	176,779
Justice	1,410	1,480	2,801	1,480
Municipal and Community Affairs	138	160	160	166
	219,090	225,674	318,910	268,470
Infrastructure Contributions				
Education, Culture and Employment	9,728	3,500	6,729	-
Health and Social Services	-	-	2,555	-
Infrastructure	9,847	32,448	32,448	22,500
Municipal and Community Affairs	47,633	29,000	95,333	54,580
	67,208	64,948	137,065	77,080
Deferred Maintenance (non-capital)				
Infrastructure	2,232	1,800	1,967	1,800
	2,232	1,800	1,967	1,800
Public Private Partnerships				
Infrastructure	1,604	-	4,204	-
	1,604	-	4,204	-
Total Infrastructure Investment	290,134	292,422	462,146	347,350

Summary of Cash Flow

(thousands of dollars)

	2022-2023 Actuals	2023-2024 Main Estimates	2023-2024 Revised Estimates	2024-2025 Main Estimates
OPERATING TRANSACTIONS				
Cash Received From:				
Canada	2,000,000	1,959,000	2,083,000	2,112,000
Other Revenues	408,000	378,000	498,000	521,000
	<u>2,408,000</u>	<u>2,337,000</u>	<u>2,581,000</u>	<u>2,633,000</u>
Cash Paid For:				
Operations Expenses	(2,244,000)	(2,237,599)	(2,539,755)	(2,331,203)
Cash Provided By Operating Transactions	164,000	99,401	41,245	301,797
CAPITAL TRANSACTIONS				
	<u>(249,000)</u>	<u>(87,000)</u>	<u>(225,000)</u>	<u>(214,000)</u>
INVESTING TRANSACTIONS				
	<u>(7,000)</u>	<u>(4,000)</u>	<u>(4,000)</u>	<u>(4,000)</u>
FINANCING TRANSACTIONS				
	<u>64,000</u>	<u>(13,000)</u>	<u>(13,000)</u>	<u>(50,000)</u>
INCREASE (DECREASE) IN CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS				
	<u>(28,000)</u>	<u>(4,599)</u>	<u>(200,755)</u>	<u>33,797</u>
Cash and Cash Equivalents, Beginning of Year	<u>(455,042)</u>	<u>(509,198)</u>	<u>(483,042)</u>	<u>(683,797)</u>
CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS, END OF YEAR	(483,042)	(513,797)	(683,797)	(650,000)

Summary of Debt and Estimated Borrowing Capacity

(thousands of dollars)

	2022-2023 Actuals	2023-2024 Main Estimates	2023-2024 Revised Estimates	2024- 2025 Main Estimates
SHORT TERM DEBT				
Government of the Northwest Territories	483,042	513,797	683,797	650,000
Hay River Health and Social Services Authority	-	1,000	1,000	1,000
NWT Hydro Corporation	54,472	75,000	75,000	75,000
	537,514	589,797	759,797	726,000
LONG TERM DEBT				
Government of the Northwest Territories:				
Bonds repayable, GNWT	180,022	180,000	180,000	180,000
Deh Cho Bridge, Real Return Bonds	185,056	180,197	184,960	183,478
Mackenzie Valley Fibre Optic Link, P3 debt	67,100	63,995	63,995	60,725
Stanton Territorial Hospital, P3 debt	123,690	120,150	120,150	116,985
Tłı̨chǫ All-Season Road, P3 debt	71,382	70,900	70,888	69,388
Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation	110	22	22	-
Public Agencies:				
NWT Hydro Corporation	189,139	260,700	262,204	258,639
Housing NWT	3,984	3,337	3,337	2,616
TOTAL DEBT	1,357,997	1,469,098	1,645,353	1,597,831
OBLIGATIONS UNDER CAPITAL LEASES				
NWT Hydro Corporation	15,545	15,207	15,140	14,735
LOAN GUARANTEES				
Prosper NWT	2,000	2,100	2,000	2,000
Housing NWT	3,459	2,225	2,359	1,544
TOTAL GROSS BORROWING PER BORROWING REGULATIONS	1,379,001	1,488,630	1,664,852	1,616,110
TERRITORIAL BORROWING	1,379,001	1,488,630	1,664,852	1,616,110
TERRITORIAL BORROWING LIMIT	1,800,000	1,800,000	1,800,000	1,800,000
AVAILABLE BORROWING AUTHORITY FOR FISCAL PLANNING PURPOSES	420,999	311,370	135,148	183,890

Provincial/Territorial Tax Rates at May 1, 2024

	Combined	Retail	Fuel Tax ^(b)		Carbon Tax ^(c)		Tobacco Tax ^(d) (\$/carton)	Payroll Tax ^(e) (%)	Corporate Income Tax		Capital Tax on Financial Institutions ^(f) (%)
	Top Marginal Personal Income Tax ^(a) (%)		Sales Tax (%)	Gasoline (¢/litre)	Diesel (¢/litre)	Gasoline (¢/litre)	Diesel (¢/litre)		Small (%)	Large (%)	
Northwest Territories	47.05	-	10.7	9.1	17.61	21.39	68.80	2.00	2.0	11.5	-
Nunavut	44.50	-	6.4	9.1	17.61	21.39	60.00	2.00	3.0	12.0	-
Yukon	48.00	-	6.2	7.2	17.61	21.39	70.00	-	-	12.0	-
British Columbia	53.50	7.0	14.5	15.0	17.61	20.74	65.00	1.95	2.0	12.0	-
Alberta	48.00	-	13.0	13.0	17.61	21.39	60.00	-	2.0	8.0	-
Saskatchewan	47.50	6.0	15.0	15.0	17.61	21.39	58.00	-	1.0	12.0	4.0
Manitoba	50.40	7.0	0.0	0.0	17.61	21.39	60.00	2.15	-	12.0	6.0
Ontario	53.53	8.0	9.0	9.0	17.61	21.39	36.95	1.95	3.2	11.5	1.25
Quebec	53.31	9.975	19.2	20.2	-	-	37.80	4.26	3.2	11.5	1.25
New Brunswick	52.50	10.0	10.87	15.45	17.61	21.39	51.04	-	2.5	14.0	5.0
Nova Scotia	54.00	10.0	15.5	15.4	17.61	21.39	59.04	-	2.5	14.0	4.0
Prince Edward Island	53.63	10.0	8.47	14.15	17.61	21.39	59.04	-	1.0	16.0	5.0
Newfoundland & Labrador	54.80	10.0	7.5	9.5	17.61	21.39	65.00	2.00	2.5	15.0	6.0
Weighted average ^(g)	52.52	7.4	12.5	13.0	13.71	16.57	46.61	2.08	2.7	11.4	1.41

Notes:

(a) Combined federal-provincial/territorial highest 2024 personal income tax rate and surtax.

(b) The NWT's off-highway gasoline tax rate is 6.4 cents/litre. British Columbia fuel tax rates do not include surtaxes that apply only in Victoria and the Lower Mainland. Quebec fuel tax rates also vary regionally.

(c) Carbon pricing is standardized for all Canadian jurisdictions effective July 1, 2023, except for Quebec that has cap and trade. British Columbia's diesel tax rate is based on lower carbon content fuel.

(d) British Columbia, Manitoba and Saskatchewan apply provincial sales tax to tobacco products. Harmonized Sales Tax is applied to tobacco products in Ontario, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland & Labrador, and Nova Scotia. Quebec does not apply sales tax to tobacco products.

(e) Nunavut and the NWT levy payroll taxes on employees. Other provinces that levy payroll taxes provide exemptions for small business and/or rates that vary depending on payroll size.

(f) Ontario and Quebec levy capital taxes on life insurance corporations. Saskatchewan and Manitoba also levy capital tax on provincial crown corporations.

(g) Average weighted by provincial/territorial populations at July 1, 2023.