



Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce

2025 Advocacy Priorities

The Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce (YK Chamber) supports and informs our city's business community to shape dialogue and identify issues of concern to member businesses. The YK Chamber also engages elected officials at all levels of government to ensure business interests are heard.

List of Priorities

Labour Shortages

Immigration

Land Availability

Aurora College Transformation Project

North Slave Geological Corridor

Public Safety

Downtown Revitalization

Airport Revolving Fund and Airport revitalization

Service Standards at the City of Yellowknife

Federal Daycare Plan

Securing Redundant Fibre Infrastructure

Labour Shortages

In the Northwest Territories (NWT), labour shortages have emerged as one of the most pressing concerns for businesses, hindering both economic growth and the sustainability of key industries. It is a complex issue that requires a combination of short-term relief measures and long-term strategic investments. There needs to be an integrated approach focusing on addressing key factors that contribute to labour shortages, such as land availability for housing, targeted immigration strategies, and upskilling the local workforce.

Immigration

Immigration remains a critical issue for Yellowknife, as we continue to face labor shortages, economic stagnation, and population decline compared to other areas of Canada. While other regions have seen success through targeted immigration programs, the Northwest Territories remains underrepresented in immigration numbers, hindering our ability to address workforce needs and support local businesses.

Increase immigration

- The Federal government to act swiftly to ensure that the Northwest Territories receives its fair share of immigrants through the Federal and Provincials Nominee Programs. As immigration is essential for addressing critical workforce shortages and ensuring long-term economic resilience.
- The Northwest Territories need a tailored immigration strategy for the Territories. This strategy should be developed through a collaborative workgroup, bringing together local, regional, and federal partners to address the unique economic and demographic needs of the region. The goal is to design immigration pathways specifically suited to the opportunities and challenges faced by our communities, ensuring that the Northwest Territories attracts and retains the talent needed to sustain and grow our population and economy.

Address retention

- Fast track high-skilled certifications for new immigrants (red seal, mechanics etc.).
- Advertise/emphasize education benefits to living in the north (money for college/university). Is there a way to backdate this for immigrants?
- IRCC settlement services ought to be available for all new arrivals to Canada not just Permanent Residents.

Land availability

Yellowknife needs more land brought to market to support development. The lack of land on which to develop has led to stagnated growth.

- The GNWT should expedite the transfer of all lands within the municipal boundary, under the administration and control of the Commissioner of the NWT, to the City of Yellowknife.
- If there are reasons why a wholesale transfer of land cannot happen within a reasonable timeframe, the City needs to pursue partial transfers in the interim.
- The City of Yellowknife needs to move more quickly to bring lands already under its control to market.


Long term housing strategy at the municipal level

A lack of land availability has led to the contraction of the home-building sector.

- The City should adopt a long-term land development approach, giving home builders the confidence in future land supply that they require to put down roots in Yellowknife and to invest in building their businesses.
- Support strategies to bolster skilled trades in the construction industry.

Aurora College Transformation project

The YK Chamber maintains that the transformation of Aurora College into a Polytechnic institution is one of Yellowknife's biggest and most achievable economic diversification projects. We have always been pro-transition and pro-job-creation-in-the-post-secondary-education sector and will keep abreast of conversations occurring at the municipal and territorial levels to ensure the project moves forward to realize its full potential including:

- Labour force skills development
 - Advancement of the knowledge economy
 - Business incubation
 - Economic development through academic research and infrastructure spending
 - Attraction of national and global talent
 - Retention of local students
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Slave Geological Province Corridor

Slave Geological Province Corridor will play a vital role in the NWT's economy providing employment, and contributing to infrastructure, capacity building, and revenues. With the looming closure of major diamond mines in the next decade, this can be a growing stream of the resource sector. The territorial government must develop a strategy for the next phase of resource development, focusing on responsible, environmentally conscious growth. There needs to be strong support, infrastructure investments, while ensuring remediation work stays in the north while addressing challenges faced by northern businesses in securing related contracts.

Arctic Security Corridor

The Arctic Security Corridor is a transformational infrastructure project that will connect southern Canada to the Arctic Ocean, strengthening Canada's Arctic sovereignty and unlocking the vast critical mineral wealth of the Northwest Territories. This multi-user, multi-purpose corridor will strengthen continental defense, facilitate trade, and create long-term economic opportunities for Yellowknife.

- Yellowknife should be recognized as the primary logistical hub driving economic diversification and growth. Leveraging its strategic location and expertise in supporting the region's resource industries.
- It is critical nation-building infrastructure as it will be the only all-season road access to a deepwater port on the Northwest Passage at Grays Bay, enabling the secure movement of resources and reinforcing North American sovereignty in the Arctic.
- Promote partnerships between the private sector, government, and Indigenous organizations to maximize the economic opportunities arising from the project and ensure the long-term success of the GBRP.

Public Safety Downtown

Public safety concerns in downtown Yellowknife have been growing steadily, driven by a combination of factors including increasing incidents of theft, harassment, and violence. Businesses are experiencing heightened security risks as aggressive behavior and disturbances become more frequent. The rising visibility of homelessness, coupled with mental health and addiction challenges, has exacerbated the situation, creating a sense of unease among tourists, residents and workers.

- The rising concerns in public safety that haven't been addressed by local governance have placed the financial burden of providing short term solutions on local businesses.

- The lack of long-term solutions, coupled with insufficient community safety resources, has left businesses and the broader downtown community facing significant risks.
- It needs to be a collaborative effort between the municipal government, businesses, and non-profit organizations to develop holistic solutions to downtown challenges, including homelessness, safety, and accessibility.

Downtown revitalization

A thriving downtown is an asset for Yellowknife's economic and social vibrancy, adding to commerce, tourism, and community life. A well-maintained and dynamic downtown attracts visitors, new businesses, and residents looking to build their careers and lives in our city. Investing in revitalization efforts will enhance Yellowknife's appeal, drive economic growth, and strengthen the sense of community.

- The YK Chamber will engage in downtown business-specific advocacy through the creation of a Business Improvement Association (BIA) Committee to focus on beautification, promotion, and capital improvements.

Federal Childcare Plan

The Federal childcare program is a crucial investment in families, early childhood education, and workforce participation in the Northwest Territories. By reducing costs and increasing access to childcare spaces, this initiative supports economic growth and community well-being. However, the approved expenditures under the program do not account for the unique costs of operating childcare facilities in the North, creating financial challenges for daycare operators.

- The national funding structure does not allow for many essential operational costs unique to the North, such as higher utility expenses, food and supply costs, and additional facility costs. Without flexibility in funding to reflect these realities, childcare centers are struggling with long-term financial sustainability.

Securing Redundant Fibre Infrastructure

The Yellowknife business community relies heavily on stable and reliable internet services for day-to-day operations. Repeated service outages caused by disruptions to the single existing fiber line severely impact local businesses and the broader economy. These outages bring business operations to a standstill—debit machines and banking services go offline, and essential services like communications and media are being disrupted that during emergencies are vital to public safety. The proposed fibre loop under Great Slave Lake would create a critical redundancy that ensures uninterrupted service, protecting businesses from costly disruptions and improving overall resiliency.



- Engage Key Stakeholders: Facilitate discussions with territorial and federal governments, the Canada Infrastructure Bank, and private sector partners to prioritize investment in the Great Slave Lake fibre loop.
- Advocate for Funding: Push for dedicated funding streams for broadband infrastructure projects, highlighting the economic benefits and business continuity advantages of redundant fibre service.
- Raise Business Community Awareness: Collaborate with local businesses and organizations to build broad-based support and demonstrate the urgent need for infrastructure investment.