



2022-2023 BUDGET ADDRESS

The Honourable Lorne Kusugak

Government of Nunavut

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MINISTER KUSUGAK 2022-23 BUDGET ADDRESS

INTRODUCTION

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to introduce our Government's proposed budget for 2022-23.

Before I begin, I would like to thank my neighbours, friends, and family from Rankin Inlet South for re-electing me last October.

They have supported me many times now, and I do not take that for granted.

It is because of them I can use my voice to influence positive change in Nunavut, and I am grateful for that.

Last fall, I spent many hours knocking on their doors, listening to their concerns, and learning about their hopes and dreams for the future.

Mr. Speaker, one encounter I had last fall really stuck with me.

As I passed through a playground one evening, a young boy came over to me to ask what I was doing and why I was knocking on people's doors.

I told him that I was going from house to house to ask people about the things that are most important to them, so that if they voted for me to be their MLA, I would know what they wanted me to do to help them.

When I asked that boy what was most important to him, I will never forget what he told me.

He talked about how much he missed his anaanatsiaq, because she was all the way in Ottawa, living in a home.

Even though the boy wasn't old enough to vote, he told me he wanted to vote for me so I could help to bring his grandmother home.

For the rest of the campaign, I was motivated by that conversation, Mr. Speaker, and I still am.

I think about that young man often and how I want to use my time in this legislature over the next three and half years to make sure that by the time he becomes a grandparent himself, his grandchildren are not saying the same thing.

With the budget I am proposing today, we are taking steps required for us to achieve this goal.

Mr. Speaker, as I work with my colleagues around the Cabinet table to make decisions, it is the vision and aspirations of Nunavummiut that guide me.

I am committed to ensuring that our government listens to and learns from the wisdom of all Nunavummiut – including the little boy in that playground – because they are the reason we are here today.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, this is the first budget of Nunavut's Sixth Legislative Assembly, and my first budget address as the Minister of Finance.

However, while I am new to this role, making sense of the government's dollars and cents is *not* new for me.

As a former Minister for the Department of Community and Government Services and the Department of Health in the previous government, I oversaw some of the biggest budgets in Nunavut's history.

Together, these two departments account for nearly 40 per cent of all spending by the Government of Nunavut.

But as big as these budgets are, I know that they are still not enough to meet all our infrastructure and public health care needs.

This is because when Nunavut became a territory 23 years ago, we did not have the same physical and service-delivery infrastructure enjoyed elsewhere in Canada.

And it has been a challenge for us to catch up, since our fiscal arrangements do not fully consider or address the health, education, and housing deficit that existed when Nunavut became a territory.

Although we have made progress, we have not yet been able to build to the same standard of public services and infrastructure that can be counted on in Southern Canada to kick start local economies and give families an opportunity to flourish.

Despite these challenges, we have moved forward because we know it is not good enough to keep doing things the way we've always done them, just because it is comfortable or familiar.

For generations, the people of this land have moved to where the opportunities are, relocating and reconstructing their camps as they followed the animals they hunted for clothing and nourishment.

These nomadic hunters perfected the essential survival skills that we rely on to this day, including resilience, persistence, and a commitment to community.

This approach, which has allowed Inuit people and our culture to thrive for generations, is what our new government will rely on to go farther and faster than we ever have before.

By working with our Inuit partners and other levels of government, our goal is to make a breakthrough during our mandate and to foster transformational change in Nunavut that echoes through future generations.

We will do this by being creative and innovative in our approaches, and by delivering concrete actions that result in a better quality of life for Nunavummiut and their families.

Since the election, we have worked hard to develop a vision and plan for the territory that meets the needs of elders and young people alike.

In December, Members of the Legislative Assembly, the leadership of Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, and Nunavut's three regional Inuit Organizations came together to collaborate on their ideas for the recently announced Katujjiluta mandate, which outlines our government's commitment to work in unity to bring new energy, new ideas, and a renewed spirit of collaboration to achieve our objectives together.

With this budget, we are laying a new foundation for the future in Nunavut – one that improves the quality of life in all communities and that diversifies our economy to ensure that the abundance of our land and water is shared by all.

Our plan includes using new methods and involving partners to support local businesses, add to community economies, and customize approaches in response to local capabilities and needs.

We will stretch our resources as far as they will go so that we can keep up with the demands of our growing population and take advantage of emerging opportunities.

Working with the federal government on nation-building projects that strengthen all of Canada, from coast to coast to coast, is central to our vision.

We are thankful to have partners in Ottawa who are willing to walk alongside us on our journey, and who have provided unprecedented support in recent years.

As we noted when we introduced our capital estimates plan, departments have identified about \$490 million in federal support for capital projects in Nunavut, mostly through distinct funding streams that flow through the Department of Community and Government Services. This funding will complement the \$356 million in new and carried over capital appropriations that will be provided by the Government of Nunavut, bringing total capital spending this year to nearly \$850 million.

But that is not all, Mr. Speaker.

In April, the federal government announced \$214 million funding to ensure the safety and long-term sustainability of Iqaluit's water supply, which is an essential first step to build more homes in our capital city and to help relieve the housing pressure across the territory.

The federal government also announced \$60 million in their budget for the Government of Nunavut to invest in affordable housing and related infrastructure, which is in addition to \$845 million over seven years for housing across Inuit Nunangat.

These investments are a game-changer, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank my federal counterpart for ensuring funding flexibility for the territory to work with its partners to develop and execute a plan for housing that realizes the promise and potential of **all** communities.

While we are excited about these federal commitments, we know that even more is needed. This is why, in addition to continuing our lobby efforts with the federal government, we are investing \$51.5 million through the Government of Nunavut – nearly 25 per cent of our total capital budget for 2022-23 – in the Nunavut Housing Corporation.

And this is just the beginning. Over the term of our government, we intend to bring forward budgets that will see us dip into our surplus to make substantial further investments in housing and housing programs.

Mr. Speaker, dipping into our surplus will mean deficit budgets. However, thanks to the prudent fiscal management of previous governments, I am confident we can safely manage these short-term deficits in order to address our dire housing shortage.

These unprecedented investments in housing are why a key commitment of our Katujjiluta mandate is to work with Inuit organizations to develop private market solutions that provide Nunavummiut with greater housing options.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Nunavut has already identified \$868 million in new capital spending over the next five years, including the \$204 million that has been approved for 2022-23. This will help transform the territory in ways that honour our unique place in Canada and the world.

Our government is confident in our collective ability to realize a prosperous, inclusive economy and healthy, welcoming communities, and the budget I present to you today is a step toward that vision.

FISCAL HIGHLIGHTS

- **2021-22 OVERVIEW**

Mr. Speaker, we are blessed to live in a territory where the resources from the land and the water have sustained our way of life for generations.

In recent years, these blessings have left Nunavut with the largest increases in Gross Domestic Product – or GDP – in all of Canada.

According to the Conference Board of Canada, our economy grew by 7.4 per cent in 2021, and in 2022, it is projected to expand by a further 6.4 per cent.

This is driven largely by activity in our mining sector, as well as easing Covid-19 health restrictions, which weighed down economic activity during the pandemic.

The result is that we ended 2021-22 in relatively good financial shape.

Although the actual year-end results will take a few months to tabulate, we expect a surplus in the area of about \$100 million.

- **2022-23 PROJECTED REVENUE**

Going forward, our 2022-23 Budget projects revenues of about \$2.6 billion, the majority of which comes from the Territorial Formula Financing program, which will provide us with nearly \$1.9 billion, or 71 per cent, of our total revenue.

We expect other federal transfers to provide an additional \$121 million, as well as approximately \$371 million through third-party funding agreements.

We plan to collect about \$277 million from our own-source revenues, including \$160 million in taxes, \$23 million in staff housing rent, and \$83 million from various other sources.

- **2022-23 PROJECTED EXPENDITURES**

In terms of spending, we expect to spend at least \$1.9 billion for government operations in 2022-23.

This is in addition to the \$204 million for Capital approved in March.

Our proposed budget also includes a contingency fund of \$75 million, the same amount proposed in the 2021-22 Budget.

This will provide us with the flexibility to address any issues or unforeseen events that arise over the course of the year.

It will also enable us to take the time we need to develop the critical strategies and actions we need to implement our Katujjiluta mandate, including one of our highest priorities – to invest in care for aging Nunavummiut.

AGING IN DIGNITY IN NUNAVUT

Mr. Speaker, our elders are Nunavut's living memory, and our government is committed to honouring them in their later years and showing them the respect they deserve.

To honour their vision and perseverance, we want our parents and grandparents to live their last years in dignity, closer to family.

We want young Nunavummiut, like the boy I met in the playground in Rankin Inlet, to grow up with their anaanatsiaq and ataatsiaq nearby, so that they can learn from and be cared for by them.

We'll begin by creating two new positions in the Department of the Executive and Intergovernmental Affairs to lead the development of a comprehensive elder and senior care strategy and implementation plan. This strategy will be developed with broad input from elders, families,

communities, and partners, with a goal of improving daily life for Nunavummiut who are aging.

We will expedite the construction of regional long-term care facilities that will be able to meet the complex care needs of Nunavummiut and we will expand and renovate existing facilities.

This year, we plan to invest another \$19 million to continue construction of the \$60 million Long-Term Elder Care Facility in Rankin Inlet.

We will also initiate our plans to enhance supports to improve daily life in continuing care facilities.

This includes providing cultural and linguistic training for staff working in continuing care facilities and encouraging community-based initiatives for elders and seniors.

Our government's proposed 2022-23 Budget takes a step in this direction by providing \$500,000 through the Department of Family Services for greater access to country food by elders and other Nunavummiut by investing in four community-based organizations working to address food insecurity.

Funding will be used to shift from *ad hoc* and emergency food relief efforts toward supporting community food organizations that are more sustainable, comprehensive, innovative, and culturally appropriate.

We want Nunavummiut to age in comfort and dignity, and the increased investment proposed for 2022-23 is just a start.

EXPANDING THE HOUSING CONTINUUM

Mr. Speaker, as you know, in addition to being the Minister of Finance, I am the Minister responsible for the Nunavut Housing Corporation.

Our Government's commitment to expand the housing continuum promises to keep me and my team busy over the next few years as we invest in new construction and partnerships to increase the range of housing options available to Nunavummiut.

Thriving communities and local economies require a mix and adequate supply of housing, but across the territory, this is a challenge.

With the cost of building in the North estimated to be close to three times higher than in Toronto, no other jurisdiction in Canada spends proportionately as much on housing as we do.

As I noted earlier, in 2022-23, our government proposes to invest \$51.5 million for the Nunavut Housing Corporation, which includes \$21 million for public housing, an increase of \$3.5 million from last year. It also includes \$6 million for staff housing, an increase of \$1 million from last year.

However, even with these investments, we know we will continue to suffer from a shortage of affordable, suitable, and supported housing.

This affects our economy and prospects for growth as well as the health and wellbeing of Nunavummiut and their communities.

This is why one of our most ambitious goals in the Katujjiluta mandate is to facilitate the development of at least 1,000 units of all types to the stock of affordable housing and continuum of housing options.

As I mentioned earlier, such an ambitious goal will require significant federal and territorial funding and you will see these commitments in our capital budgets over the term of this government. Plans are already under development that could see proposed incremental spending of more than \$200 million on housing and housing programs during our mandate with the support of this Assembly.

To better use the housing we have now, we will review and improve the delivery of staff housing programs and prioritize actions that encourage Nunavummiut to move into affordable rental units or homes of their own.

Mr. Speaker, homelessness and severe overcrowding is a widespread issue that affects the lives of many across Nunavut.

Some Nunavummiut have no choice but to seek shelter in unstable and unhealthy places so that they can endure the extreme climate and harsh conditions of our environment.

This puts them at risk of violence, exploitation, and continued cycles of addiction, which is far more costly for them, their families, their communities, and governments in the long run.

To address this, the Department of Family Services is working with the federal government and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated on a Tripartite Table on Homelessness.

In this budget, we propose \$1.5 million to support initiatives that result from this partnership, such as new shelter requests, transitional housing, respite spaces, the Ikur'raq cabin building program, community capacity building, and temporary emergency-response shelters.

We also propose \$1.5 million for Family Violence Shelter Funding to ensure adequate staffing levels and to strengthen their capacity to deliver programming, counselling, and support services.

This enhanced funding will benefit existing family violence shelters in Rankin Inlet, Cambridge Bay, Kugluktuk, and Kugaaruk, as well as new shelters that are expected to open in Pond Inlet and Gjoa Haven in 2022-23, and in Baker Lake and Pangnirtung in future years.

The government also proposes \$3.7 million to support the increasing number of clients in group homes, supported living homes, and alternative family care homes, as well as the greater complexity of their care requirements.

We need to do all we can so that everyone feels safe and cared for in those settings.

ENABLING HEALTH AND HEALING

Mr. Speaker, supporting the health and healing of Nunavummiut is a priority of our government.

The Katujjiluta mandate outlines our commitment to invest in training and community-led programs to ensure that more local and culturally relevant health services are available.

Investing in prevention and other population health supports has been a challenge for Nunavut in the past given the cost to the territory for patient transportation, an expense that other jurisdictions do not have.

Over the years, successive territorial health ministers have advocated for the federal government to recognize its obligation to ensure equitable health care for Nunavummiut, which finally resulted in a commitment last year by the federal government for \$58 million to cover the cost of medical travel.

This funding, which will once again be available in 2022-23, will enable the Department of Health to reallocate up to \$33 million in the year ahead in key initiatives, such as hiring public agency nurses and investing in health centre security, laboratory services, pharmacy services, and paramedic support services.

Overall, our government's proposed 2022-23 budget includes funding for 75 new health care support positions such as:

- \$2.1 million to hire 31 new Medical Travel Clerks to improve service for medical travel clients
- \$1.6 million to hire 25 new Housekeeping staff to maintain the cleaning protocols implemented in response to Covid-19, and
- \$1.3 million to hire 19 new Registration Clerks to support health record implementation and enable Interpretation Clerks to dedicate their time to providing quality client service.

Every year, the demand for community health centre services grows alongside Nunavut's population, and these new positions will strengthen health care capacity and create good jobs in our communities.

Through targeted recruitment efforts, we will ensure the positions are filled by Nunavut Inuit, and all new staff will be provided with training and support to ensure they uphold health standards and maintain client confidentiality.

To support our new government's commitment to health and healing, our proposed budget also includes \$1.2 million to expand the Health Information Unit to better integrate evidence and data into future decisions.

Health research provides important information about disease trends and risk factors, outcomes of treatment or public health interventions, and health care costs and use.

Collecting and analyzing this data and undertaking more rigorous research about our health system will enable us to develop guidelines for best practices and ensure high-quality patient care.

Mr. Speaker, our proposed budget includes \$1.5 million to support implementation of the *Mental Health Act* which passed in 2021, including early intervention, Inuit approaches to healing, and more local supports.

Funding will be used to enhance case management, provide care closer to home, and develop and deliver new policies, training, and regulations, including a Mental Health and Addictions Strategy.

These investments in the wellbeing of Nunavummiut are just the start.

During our mandate, we will build on these initiatives and expand effective models for community-led programs and services.

This includes improving the quality of services delivered by the Family Wellness Division in the Department of Family Services.

On this front, our 2022-23 Budget proposes to invest \$310,000 to create a new Quality Improvement Program to improve adoptions and foster care programs.

Family Services will also hire three (3) new Client Liaison Officers to monitor the provision of residential service care and ensure they meet our high standards.

In addition, our government's proposed budget provides \$2.8 million in operational funding to hire 28 people at the Aaqqigiarvik Correctional Healing Facility.

Aaqqigiarvik means "a place for help to make progress in life", and this funding supports that by creating a more positive environment that is conducive to a healthy and respectful path forward for inmates.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the health and healing of Nunavummiut is affected by the grief that so many of us live with because of the historical and intergenerational trauma.

To better support those who deal with addiction and dependency, our capital plan proposes a further \$19 million, including \$2.1 million in 2022-23, to help build the Nunavut Recovery Centre. This, combined with the \$42 million committed by the federal government, will provide a state-of-the-art facility with programming specifically designed for our culture and values.

This Centre, which will be founded and developed based on Inuit cultural practices and values, will provide a range of treatment and healing interventions to address both substance use and trauma.

Treatment will be based on Inuit cultural values, practices, and knowledge so that those who need it the most can build a solid foundation on which their journey of healing can begin.

REINVESTING IN EDUCATION

Mr. Speaker, just as our elders hold a special place in our hearts, so do our young people.

Nunavut has the youngest population in Canada, with about one-third of Nunavummiut being under the age of 15.

In the years ahead, these young people will become adults looking for work, training, and somewhere to live and raise their own families.

To prepare children and youth to take their places as the leaders of our territory, the Katujjiluta mandate commits our government to invest in supports that help them gain self-esteem, develop healthier relationships, and successfully pursue education and employment.

This is why our five-year capital plan includes over \$70 million, including \$7.5 million in 2022-23, to advance the construction of schools in Taloyoak and Coral Harbour, and to substantively complete the renovations of the Ecole des Trois Soleils here in Iqaluit.

Our plan also recognizes the value of investing in children and youth by supporting them to engage in sport and physical activity.

Sport and recreation helps children learn how to succeed at school and builds their skills and confidence for the future.

It also creates greater community cohesion and gives Nunavummiut who are on the field and in the stands a stronger sense of connection.

For this, the proposed 2022-23 Budget includes \$1.7 million to support Nunavut's youth to participate in the Arctic Winter Games, which are an opportunity for them to showcase their talents to the world.

The Games, which are usually held every two years, were cancelled in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic and postponed again for 2022.

Instead, they will be held back-to-back in 2023 and 2024, after which they will resume their normal schedule.

Supporting youth development includes investments in early learning and childcare.

Mr. Speaker, this past January, our government took a monumental step down this path when our Premier and the Prime Minister jointly announced an agreement to provide an average of \$10 a day childcare by March 2024.

This agreement, which is expected to save families with children up to six years old up to \$14,000 per year, also commits \$66 million over five years to create 238 new licensed early learning and childcare spaces by the end of March 2026.

Although there are infrastructure challenges that must be addressed for us to fully meet these goals, we are a step closer to improving childcare and addressing our years-long wait lists and shortage of trained childcare staff.

Mr. Speaker, in 2022-23, our Government will continue to implement a new school staff funding formula that better reflects the needs of students and schools across the territory.

This will be the second year of a three year roll out of this new formula for schools, and it will bring the total budget for the Department of Education to \$252.3 million, an increase of \$8.7 million or 3.5 per cent over last year.

Last year, the new formula resulted in 42 net new Student Support Assistants in our schools to help our students succeed.

This year, we will invest a further \$2.5 million to hire 25 new Iliniarvimmi inuusiliriji (school community counsellors), school secretaries, and custodians in our schools.

These critical positions will help to keep our schools safe and clean, and they will support the mental health and well-being of our students.

To ensure that every student in Nunavut can get to school on time every day, our proposed 2022-23 Budget commits \$1.4 million for more school bussing across the territory.

It also provides an increase of \$4.2 million to account for the new four-year collective bargaining agreement signed with the Nunavut Teachers' Association in January.

This agreement will support teacher recruitment and retention by implementing annual wage increases beginning retroactively in July 2021.

To support bilingual education in our schools, Inuit Language Allowances will be provided to eligible employees.

As well, the new agreement includes more flexibility to assist teachers and their families through new paid leave allowances, including for domestic violence.

The agreement provides competitive salaries and benefits so that Nunavut can continue to recruit and retain the best teachers for our communities.

Teachers are the pillars of our education system, and they are critical partners to help us deliver our commitments in the Katujjiluta mandate.

We will work closely with them as we undertake our plans for a phased rollout of full-day kindergarten programs and accelerate work on the K-12 Inuit language curriculum and Nunavut-specific learning resources.

Other key mandate actions include integrating more life skills and career counselling into the K-12 curriculum to foster self-reliance, self-esteem, and early career direction.

We will also enhance and support school meal programs with community-based partners so that no child struggles to learn on an empty stomach.

To support our students to succeed after graduation, we will prepare and implement a multi-year training strategy with Inuit organizations and other partners to enable the development of Nunavut's labour force and economy.

Our goal is to increase training for employment in sectors such as mining, arts and crafts, tourism, and small business as well as create opportunities for pre-employment work experiences for high school and post-secondary students throughout the year.

Support for enhanced education in Nunavut includes improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the Financial Assistance for Northern Students program and other direct and indirect supports for post-secondary learners.

An example of this in our proposed budget is the Government of Nunavut's Summer Student Employment Equity Program supported by the Department of Human Resources.

For this program, we intend to invest \$2.6 million, an increase of \$1.6 million, to provide government employment opportunities so that high school and post-secondary students can gain skills, knowledge, and abilities in their areas of interest and study.

Our commitment to education includes support for continuous learning across all ages.

On this front, the Amaaqtaarniq Education sponsorship and leave program for Inuit programs in the Department of Human Resources has shown encouraging results.

23 Inuit employees are currently pursuing various post-secondary credentials to enable them to qualify for professional and management positions in our government, and since 2018-19, ten (10) have completed their studies.

Our proposed budget also includes continued funding for the Inuit Executive Career Development Program, which provides career development and advancement opportunities for Inuit to successfully move into senior management and executive positions in the Government of Nunavut.

Currently, there are 12 participants enrolled in this program, which was developed and launched in September 2021.

These programs, which provide on-the-job training, mentoring, access to academic courses and other learning experiences for young Nunavummiut, are a reason the Government of Nunavut has been recognized as one of Canada's top 100 employers for young people for the fourth year in a row.

Mr. Speaker, our government continues to be committed to meeting our obligations under Article 23 of the Nunavut Agreement to achieve a representative public service, and initiatives like this will support our success in meeting our Inuit employment targets.

DIVERSIFYING OUR LOCAL ECONOMIES

The Katujjiluta mandate includes a commitment by our government to help diversify our local economies.

One of our most significant initiatives in this regard relates to our plans to bring high-speed fibre optic internet to Nunavut so that Nunavummiut can connect with each other and the rest of the world.

In 2022-23, we plan to invest \$17.2 million in the Fibre Project, which is critical to creating successful, sustainable communities and improving service delivery across the territory.

Connecting to fibre optic cable will result in greater satellite bandwidth and faster internet for other communities in Nunavut, supporting our efforts to achieve sustainable economic development and diversification in all sectors.

Our economic diversification efforts also include investing in Nunavut's potential to grow the blue economy.

This includes investing \$2.5 million over the next five years for small craft harbours and \$320,000 this year to initiate a marine infrastructure project in Qikiqtarjuaq. The federal government has committed \$24.5 million to improve sealift areas in several of our communities over the next few years which will help to develop our Arctic trade corridor and improve northern vessel safety and services.

We also propose to develop our ocean economy by investing in research and data, such as \$1.5 million for the Research Vessel Nuliajuk, Nunavut's multi-purpose fisheries research vessel to advance science-based conservation and the sustainable development of Nunavut fisheries.

Air travel provides an essential connection between our communities. To keep air travel safe and comfortable, we have committed \$8 million in 2022-23 to replace or expand six air terminal buildings. Through the National Trade Corridors Fund, Canada will add an additional \$23.3 million to these projects this year.

Mr. Speaker, pursuing our climate goals by investing in existing infrastructure is an opportunity for economic development, which is why we propose to provide \$500,000 through the Department of Environment's Renewable Energy Support Program in 2022-23.

This program, which provides grants to homeowners and cabin owners to purchase and install renewable energy systems, is a tangible way for Nunavummiut to minimize their carbon footprints while also generating economic activity.

To date, 81 cabins and three (3) homes have been approved for funding.

These kinds of investments, which help us to strengthen our economy as well as pursue our climate goals, are important given the territory's reliance on the resource sector as the main source of its economic growth.

In the longer term, Nunavut's economy is expected to remain strong due in part to favourable commodity prices for minerals and a new mine that is set to begin production in 2024.

As this sector grows, so do the opportunities for Nunavut's small- and medium-sized businesses.

To support these efforts, the government will refresh the strategic plans for sustainable economic development and diversification in all sectors, including mining.

To position Nunavut as an attractive and welcoming jurisdiction for mineral exploration and investment, our proposed budget includes \$1 million for a new mineral exploration program called Discover, Invest, and Grow, or DIG.

Nunavut is one of the only jurisdictions in Canada that does not have a mineral exploration support program.

To help us compete for investors, the proposed DIG program is designed to encourage mineral exploration by the junior mining sector, which has the potential to support more and better job opportunities for Nunavummiut.

This point is key, because although Nunavut's economic outlook is bright, we know that more Nunavummiut need to benefit from the opportunities presented by our growing economy.

Growth for the sake of growth is pointless if it does not translate into development and a higher quality of life for Nunavummiut.

This means that our future economy must be built on a foundation that prioritizes jobs and opportunities here at home.

As we work toward developing a diversified economy in Nunavut, we will do just that.

Mr. Speaker, with this budget, we are a step closer to devolution and the final transfer of jurisdiction over Crown lands and resources from the Government of Canada to Nunavut.

Devolution will bring decision-making closer to home, giving Nunavummiut a greater say in the issues that affect them.

Final decisions over public lands and resources will be made in Nunavut and not in Ottawa.

As with the investments in housing and other key infrastructure noted earlier, devolution will be a catalyst for the transformational change that propels us on the next phase of Nunavut's journey.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Speaker, before I conclude my remarks about this year's proposed budget and our plans to invest in the Katujjiluta mandate, I would like to thank my staff and everyone who spent countless hours to develop this budget during a period of change and transition.

Our new government has been able to create an ambitious plan with the assistance of public servants from across all departments, and I am excited by what we will achieve in the coming years with their support.

Although our goals are ambitious and require much hard work and new investment, I am optimistic that we will achieve all we set out to do.

If the past is any indication of the future, we will continue to achieve great things, for we have already come far in a short amount of time.

On one hand, the twenty-three years the territory has been in existence seems like a blink of an eye.

On the other hand, the change and transition we've experienced is as profound as the journey of a person from newborn baby to young adult.

Over the years, I've been proud to personally witness this journey for so many of Rankin Inlet's youth.

Without telling you how old I am, Mr. Speaker, let me just say that I've seen more than one generation of babies grow up to have babies of their own.

Over 20 years ago as Mayor of Rankin Inlet I wanted to celebrate these young people, and to honour their contribution to the bright future we all look forward to, I started gifting a new watch with the year engraved on it to the new graduates in my community of Rankin Inlet.

I plan to give out 47 watches at the end of this school year, and my goal by the end of the Sixth Assembly is to give out hundreds more.

I do this so that graduates are reminded of their accomplishments every time they looked down at their wrist.

I want them to remember that time is precious, and that building for the future means seizing opportunities today.

Mr. Speaker, I want them to know that our government, guided by the strategic outcomes outlined in the Katujjiluta mandate, is committed to working hard on behalf of them, their families, and our communities for a better quality of life for all.

Together with our partners, elders, and young people, we will continue to pursue the dream of Nunavut, and the budget that I submit to you today brings us closer to our vision.

Qujannamiik.