

Living Wage in Whitehorse, Yukon: 2026



Yukon Anti-Poverty
COALITION
anti-pauvreté du Yukon

Prepared by: Kendall Hammond

About the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition

The Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition works to facilitate the elimination of poverty in the Yukon through awareness, education, advocacy, action, and community building. The Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition works on issues involving food, shelter, income, and access to services with over 600 community members including representatives from non-governmental organizations, elected officials, and representatives from the business and faith communities.

The vision of the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition is that all people in the Yukon live in an inclusive community free from poverty where diversity is respected and human rights are upheld. The official mandate of the organization is to:

- Foster strategies, actions, and partnerships with organizations to reduce and prevent poverty in the Yukon
- Identify gaps, support collaboration, and facilitate the development of solutions to deal with the effects of poverty
- Provide specific programming to alleviate the impacts of poverty on individuals and families
- Provide safe and welcoming spaces for new ideas and solutions to be incubated and supported
- Increase awareness of the causes of poverty and its impacts on Yukon people
- Provide factual information on poverty based on research and lived experience
- Coordinate actions and information regarding poverty within and outside the Yukon
- Advocate and support individuals and families to navigate current systems
- Advocate for positive systemic change with partner organizations

For more information:
www.yapc.ca Email: info@yapc.ca Call: (867) 334-9317

About the author Kendall Hammond is a public policy researcher. He holds a Master of Public Administration from the University of Victoria and a Bachelor of Arts from the University of British Columbia.

Land Acknowledgement This report was prepared on the traditional territories of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council in Whitehorse, Yukon.

How to cite this document Hammond, K. (2026). *Living Wage in Whitehorse, Yukon: 2026*. Whitehorse, Yukon: Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition.

Design & Layout: Tanya Handley, www.bearbait.ca

Considerations for Policy

The living wage calculation serves as an indicator for affordability and the cost of living in a community. Given that the living wage calculation integrates the role of social services and the design of the tax-and-transfer system, the living wage rate can serve as a lens for assessing public policy. All levels of government hold responsibility for particular areas that impact affordability. Good public policy should seek to improve affordability through one of the following approaches:

1. Reducing the cost of basic household needs such as housing, health care and child care;
2. Increasing household incomes through means such as increasing government transfers to low- and modest-income households or increasing the minimum wage.

Decreases in the living wage experienced in 2017 and 2022 were largely the result of the introduction of policies that improved affordability for low- and modest-income households with children such as the Canada Child Benefit and the introduction of universal low-fee childcare in the Yukon.

In recent years, affordability challenges have worsened due to substantial increases in the cost of basic household needs including housing, food, and transportation. Additionally, the recent elimination of rental protections including the reintroduction of no-cause evictions may result in higher housing costs for those who benefitted from previous rental protections. Significant action from all levels of government is required to address affordability challenges in a meaningful way and reduce the number of Yukoners experiencing poverty.

Background

Each year, the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition calculates the living wage for Whitehorse, Yukon to maintain a current and accurate measurement of the cost of living in the community. The living wage is equal to the hourly rate of pay that a household must earn while working full-time to meet its basic needs such as food, shelter, and clothing.

Living wage calculations are an effective way to measure the cost of living in a way that directly integrates the role of public policy including the provision of social services and the tax-and-transfer system. The living wage helps identify and quantify affordability challenges, while also highlighting where policy changes such as investments in affordable child care, housing, health care, and public transportation can improve affordability and reduce poverty. Calculating the living wage on an annual basis enables an ongoing assessment of how public policy supports or falls short in helping households meet their basic needs. It is a tool that can be used to hold all levels of government accountable for their role in addressing affordability challenges and reducing poverty.

This report presents the findings from the 11th annual living wage calculation for Whitehorse, Yukon and concludes with recommendations to help improve affordability and reduce poverty throughout the territory.

How is the Living Wage Calculated?

The living wage is equal to the hourly rate of pay that a household requires to meet its basic needs after accounting for government transfers and deductions from income. Government transfers such as the Canada Groceries and Essentials Rebate and the Yukon Child Benefit help reduce the living wage by providing an additional source of household income. Deductions from income such as Employment Insurance premiums and income taxes increase the living wage much like a household expense.

The Canadian Living Wage Framework provides a methodology that guides all living wage calculations across the country. The framework specifies the household expenses included in the calculation and is intended to reflect a modest standard of living that allows for some social inclusion. The calculation includes the following household expenses: shelter, food, clothing, child care, transportation, health care, other household items and social inclusion, and a small contingency fund. Earning a living wage enables households to meet their basic needs and to avoid the adverse outcomes associated with poverty such as food insecurity, social exclusion, unhealthy child development, poor physical and mental health, and concurrent chronic conditions.¹

The Canadian Living Wage Framework also specifies that all workers upon which the calculation is based are assumed to work 35 hours per week.² Statistics Canada defines a full-time employee as anyone who works 30 or more hours per week at their primary or only job.³ A work week consisting of 35 hours of paid time may be the equivalent of at least 37.5 hours after accounting for unpaid breaks.

Adhering to a standardized methodology enhances the credibility of these calculations by ensuring consistency. It also allows for a meaningful comparison of findings across communities since any differences in the living wage reflect real differences in the cost of living.

Between 2016 and 2024, the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition calculated the living wage based on the needs of a reference household consisting of two adults and two children as outlined in the Canadian Living Wage Framework. In recognition of the fact that the reference household does not reflect the diversity of living situations found in Whitehorse or communities throughout the Yukon, the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition updated its methodology to reflect the experience of other household types.

The Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition first calculated the living wage for a single adult living alone in 2024 and in 2025 updated the methodology to reflect the weight average of costs, government benefits and taxes for the following three different household types:



The weighting for each household type is determined by the relative prevalence of each household type as reported by Statistics Canada in the 2021 census.⁴ Table 1 provides a breakdown of the prevalence and weighting of each household type used in the 2026 living wage calculation for Whitehorse, Yukon.

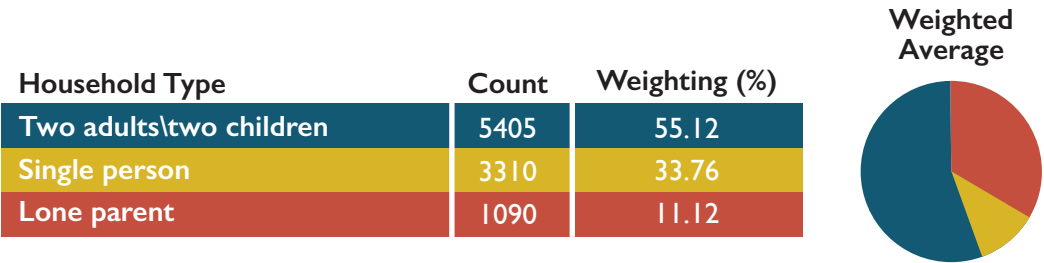


Table 1: Count and weighting of households used in the 2026 living wage calculation, by household type.

Source: Statistics Canada. Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population - Whitehorse

This revised methodology improves on previous living wage calculations by better reflecting the diversity of living arrangements found in Whitehorse and throughout the Yukon. Further, conducting the calculation in this manner provides valuable insight into inequities in the tax-and-transfer system based on household type. However, ongoing methodological limitations include the failure to account for experiences of wage discrimination. Statistics Canada reports that women⁵, Indigenous Peoples⁶, people of colour⁷, and people with disabilities⁸ all experience wage discrimination.

Due to recent methodological changes, it is important to exercise caution when comparing findings across years. For example, the living wage presented in this report based on weighted average of the three different household types can only be compared directly to the findings from the 2025 report. Otherwise, direct comparisons can only be made for the same household type.

Whitehorse Living Wage Calculations by Household Type:

Lone parent										✓	✓
Single person									✓	✓	✓
Two adults\two children	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026

A Modest Standard of Living

This calculation does not account for many items and expenses that are common to most Canadian households such as credit card debt, home ownership, eating at restaurants, pet ownership, anything beyond minimal education, and savings for retirement or children’s future education. As such, the living wage provides a conservative estimate of the cost of living in Whitehorse, Yukon.

Comparing the Cost of Living in Whitehorse to Other Yukon Communities

Available data such as the Community Spatial Index produced by the Yukon Bureau of Statistics and the Food Cost Monitoring Study conducted by the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition in 2017 suggest that the cost of most goods and services are higher in all other Yukon communities compared to Whitehorse. For example, the Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition found that the cost of a nutritious diet in Yukon communities in 2017 ranged from \$274.78 in Whitehorse to \$500.24 in Old Crow.⁹ **The cost of a nutritious diet in every Yukon community was at least 10% higher than in Whitehorse.**

Most government transfers to individuals do not provide an enhanced benefit to individuals living in remote communities with higher costs. The higher cost of most goods and services means that the living wage in other Yukon communities is likely substantially higher than in Whitehorse and contributes to the higher rate of poverty experienced in all other Yukon communities compared to Whitehorse.

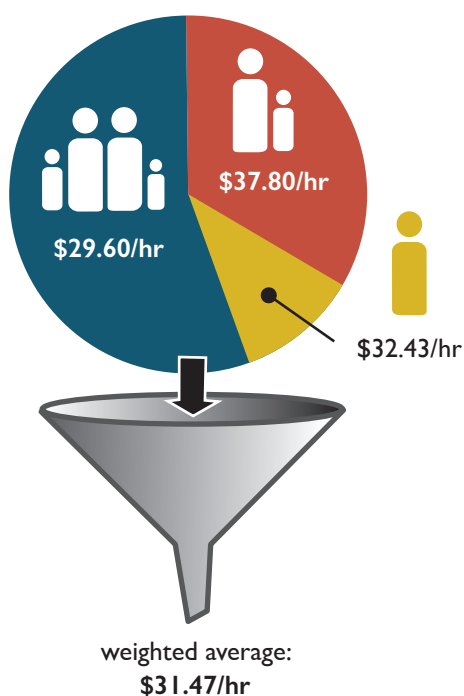
2026 Living Wage Results

The living wage for Whitehorse, Yukon in 2026 equals \$31.47 per hour based on the weighted average of the three household types that inform the calculation. This reflects an increase of \$2.73 per hour (or 9.1%) compared to 2025 when the living wage equalled \$28.74 per hour.

Similar to the findings reported for 2025, there remains a substantial difference in the cost of living for each household type. The living wage for the reference household (two adults with two children) continues to be significantly lower than the other household types, partially because of economies of scale available to larger households. Lone parent households face more difficult challenges related to affordability as demonstrated by the significantly higher living wage for this household type. Table 2 below provides a breakdown of the calculation for each household type.

Household Type	Living wage	Annual employment income	Annual government transfers	Annual household expenses	Annual deductions
Two adults\two children	\$29.60	\$107,744.00	\$9,094.86	\$99,500.98	\$17,317.92
Single person	\$32.43	\$47,842.79	\$2,592.48	\$39,253.88	\$11,179.81
Lone parent	\$37.80	\$55,607.85	\$12,178.83	\$54,597.69	\$13,188.15

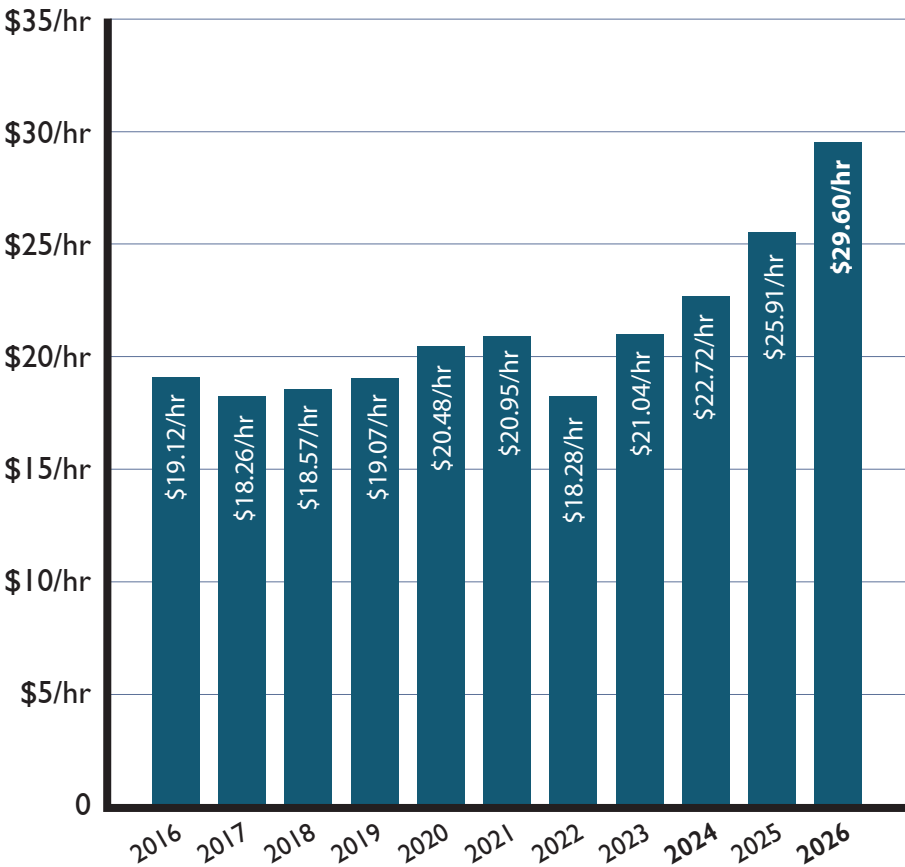
Table 2: Breakdown of the living wage calculation for Whitehorse, Yukon in 2026, by household type



Comparison with the Minimum Wage

As of April 1, 2026, the Yukon minimum wage equals \$18.51 per hour. This is \$12.96 below the weighted Whitehorse living wage. A substantial gap between the minimum wage and the living wage exists for all household types: \$-11.09 for the reference household (two adults/two children), \$-13.92 for a single person, and \$-19.29 for a lone parent. The gap between the minimum wage and the living wage reflects the severity of the affordability challenges facing low-income households. Households earning less than a living wage often face difficult circumstances such as living in overcrowded or unsuitable housing, eating an unhealthy diet, or forgoing meals.

The living wage increased among all household types in 2026. The living wage for the reference household went from \$25.91 per hour in 2025 to \$29.60 per hour in 2026, an increase of 13.3%. Since 2016, the living wage for this household type has increased by an average annual rate of 4.05%, considerably higher than the Bank of Canada’s inflation target. The figure below provides an annual breakdown of the living wage for a household consisting of two adults and two children living in Whitehorse since 2016.



The living wage for the single person increased from \$31.22 in 2025 to \$32.43 in 2026, an increase of \$1.21 per hour while the living wage for a lone parent household increased from \$33.95 in 2025 to \$37.80 in 2026. These finding highlights the serious affordability challenges that many Yukoners continue to experience.



Household Expenses

The Canadian Living Wage Framework's expense categories are used to construct the annual cost of a modest standard of living. The calculation includes nine categories of household expenses: food, shelter, clothing, child care (where applicable), transportation, health care, adult education, other household items and social inclusion, and a small contingency fund. Table 3 below provides a summary of the household expenses incurred by each household type.

Expense	Two adults with two children	Single Person	Lone Parent
Food	\$17,850.03	\$6,006.27	\$8,925.01
Shelter	\$31,580.38	\$18,573.69	\$22,835.25
Clothing	\$3,721.39	\$930.35	\$1,860.70
Child Care	\$6,589.43	N/A	\$1,824.00
Transportation	\$10,153.40	\$1,044.00	\$2,607.80
Health Care	\$5,093.76	\$2,156.52	\$2,723.76
Adult Education	\$1,396.00	\$713.00	\$713.00
Other Household Expenses and Social Inclusion	\$18,972.59	\$7,559.95	\$10,462.17
Contingency Fund	\$4,414.00	\$2,270.10	\$2,646.00
Total Expenses	\$99,500.98	\$39,253.88	\$54,597.69

Table 3: Summary of household expenses in 2026, by household type

Understanding the Household Expenses

The high cost of housing and food continues to result in significant affordability challenges for low- and modest-income Yukoners. For example, the household consisting of two adults and two children incurred a record high shelter expense of \$31,580.38, up slightly from \$31,091.16 in 2025. Although the rate of increase in shelter costs slowed considerably compared to the rapid growth seen in recent years, shelter continues to be by far the single greatest expense incurred by all household types. Recent increases in the cost of electricity and home heating fuel continue to put upward pressure on the cost of housing for many Yukoners. Notably, the impacts of the housing crisis are much more profound for single parent households and people living alone as these household types spend a far greater share of their income on shelter.

The rising cost of food also continued to present a significant affordability challenge for many Yukoners in 2026. The annual cost of food for the household with two adults and two children equalled \$17,850.38 in 2026 an increase of 11.5% compared to 2025 when the household incurred a food expense of \$15,788.98. This dramatic increase is in addition to significant price growth observed in recent years and points to a growing crisis in food insecurity as the sustained increase in food prices makes it more difficult for low- and modest-income Yukoners to afford a nutritious diet.

Government Transfers

Government transfers provide households with an additional source of income outside of employment to help offset the cost of living. Increases in transfers to low- and modest-income families help lower the living wage by decreasing the amount of income that a family must earn through employment to meet their basic needs. Both the federal government and the territorial government provide a range of targeted income supports to assist low- and modest income families as well as special populations such as seniors and people with disabilities.

Income supports available to the low- and modest-income households in Whitehorse with children include the Canada Child Benefit, the Yukon Child Benefit, and the Yukon Child Care Subsidy. Additional income supports available to low- and modest-income households in Whitehorse include the Canada Groceries and Essentials Rebate and the Canada-Yukon Housing Benefit.

Typically, the amount of a specific transfer that a household receives is calculated based on the household's net income from the previous year. All government transfers received by each of the households for 2026 are calculated based on the 2025 household net income.

Table 4 below provides a detailed breakdown of the federal and territorial transfers received by each household type in 2026.

Government Transfer	Two adults/ two children	Single person	Lone parent
Canada Child Benefit	\$9,094.86	N/A	\$7,149.25
GST Credit / Canada Groceries and Essentials Benefit	\$0.00 ^x	\$192.48	\$0.00 ^x
Canada-Yukon Housing Benefit	\$0.00 ^x	\$2,400.00	\$4,800.00
Yukon Child Benefit	\$0.00 ^x	N/A	\$229.58
Total	\$9,094.86	\$2,592.48	\$12,178.83

^x Household does not qualify for benefit as household income exceeds threshold for recipients.

Table 4: Government transfers received in 2026, by household type

It is important to note that significantly more generous benefits are available to households with children than single people. Income supports such as the Canada Child Benefit play a key role in reducing poverty among households with children.

Deductions from Income

Most individuals who work in Canada incur various deductions from income including federal and provincial/territorial income taxes and contributions to the Canada Pension Plan and Employment Insurance. Deductions from income increase the living wage much like a household expense.

All tax credits are allocated in a manner that is most advantageous to the household to help ensure a conservative estimate of the living wage. Additionally, the calculation assumes that the other household items and social inclusion expense covers the cost of eligible child fitness and art expenses so that both households with children can take full advantage of available territorial tax credits.

Generally, households with higher incomes pay more income tax due to the progressive nature of Canada’s income tax system.

Deduction from Income	Two Adults/ Two Children	Single Person	Lone Parent
Federal Income Tax	\$6,840.72	\$4,846.36	\$5,757.24
Canada Pension Plan Premiums	\$5,994.27	\$3,303.59	\$3,885.11
Employment Insurance Premiums	\$1,756.23	\$962.07	\$1,121.37
Territorial Income Tax	\$2,726.71	\$2,067.78	\$2,424.42
Total	\$17,317.92	\$11,179.81	\$13,188.15

Table 5: Deductions from income in 2026, by household type

Recommendations

The Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition continues to advocate for a comprehensive approach to addressing affordability challenges experienced by low- and modest-income Yukoners and to reducing poverty throughout the territory. This section includes four recommendations intended to improve affordability and reduce the gap between the living wage and the minimum wage by increasing household incomes and reducing the costs of basic needs.

- **Substantially increase investments in social and affordable housing to reduce the cost of rental housing.**

Rationale: Major investments in social and affordable housing are needed throughout the territory to address the ongoing housing crisis. A significant increase in housing supply is required to eliminate wait lists for seniors and social housing, to reduce the cost of rental housing, and to ensure that no Yukoner experiences homelessness.

- **Eliminate all fares on public transit and explore opportunities to increase access to public transportation in rural communities across the territory.**

Rationale: Transportation is one of the largest expenses incurred by low- and modest-income Yukoners. Free and accessible public transit can help improve affordability and promote social and economic inclusion.

- **Conduct a comprehensive review of the territorial minimum wage rate.**

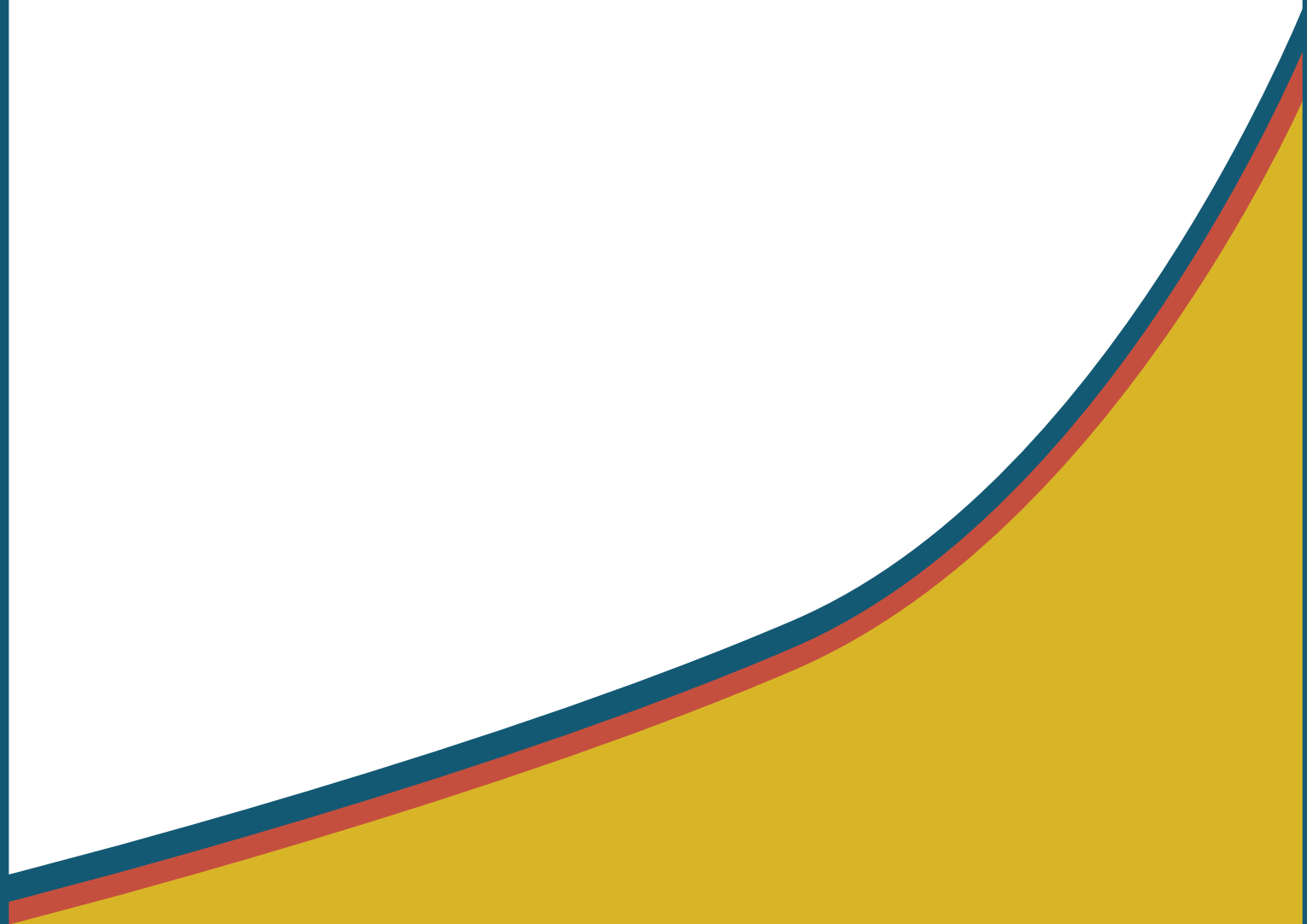
Rationale: The Yukon Employment Standards Board last conducted a review of the minimum wage in 2018. Another review of the Yukon's minimum wage policy is required to ensure that the minimum wage rate reflects the needs of Yukoners.

- **Introduce a basic income program in the Yukon.**

Rationale: Available evidence suggests that the introduction of a basic income program can be a powerful tool to reduce poverty in the territory. Recent experience with the Canadian Emergency Response as part of the Government of Canada's response to the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates how income supports can help significantly reduce the prevalence of poverty among recipients. The Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition released a position paper in September 2025 outlining key principles to inform the design of a basic income program in the territory.

References:

1. Commission on the Social Determinants of Health. (2008). Closing the gap in a generation: health equity through action on the social determinants of health. *Final Report of the Commission on Social Determinants of Health*. Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization.
2. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, First Call BC, and Vibrant Communities Canada (2013). *Canadian Living Wage Framework: A national methodology for calculating the living wage in your community*.
3. Statistics Canada. (2010). *Classification of Full-time and Part-Time Work Hours*. Ottawa, Canada.
4. Statistics Canada. Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population - Whitehorse, City (CY): Yukon [Census subdivision]
5. Drolet, M. and Amini, M. M. (2023). Intersectional perspective on the Canadian gender wage gap. *Statistics Canada catalogue no. 45-20-002*. Ottawa, Canada.
6. Indigenous Services Canada. (2023). *An update on the socio-economic gaps between Indigenous Peoples and the non-Indigenous population in Canada: Highlights from the 2021 Census*. Ottawa, Canada.
7. Hudon, T. (2016). Visible Minority Women. *Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 89-503-X*. Ottawa, Canada. Released March 3, 2016.
8. Galarneau, D. and Radulescu, M. (2015). Employment among the disabled. *Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 75-001-X*. Ottawa, Ontario.
9. Hammond, K. (2017). *The cost of healthy eating in Yukon: 2017*. Whitehorse, Yukon: Yukon Anti-Poverty Coalition.



Yukon Anti-Poverty
COALITION
anti-pauvreté du Yukon