

Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation
Business Plan Fiscal 2026-2027

Annual Budget and Financial Projections for 2026-27 through 2028-29

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Executive Summary

The Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation (NOHFC) successfully fulfilled its mandate to strengthen Northern Ontario's economy during the 2025-26 fiscal year. This was achieved by maintaining NOHFC's unwavering focus in support of projects that prioritized economic development, jobs, and investment in the region. Under the guidance of The Honourable George Pirie, Minister of Northern Economic Development and Growth, NOHFC's Board of Directors showed their dedication by ensuring that the programs stayed relevant and addressed the specific needs of Northern Ontario.

Ontario is confronting significant economic challenges due to U.S.-imposed tariffs, which are impacting businesses and communities across the province. In response, the government is implementing measures to protect workers and strengthen the economy. Recognizing the heightened vulnerability of Northern Ontario, the province is refocusing the NOHFC to prioritize strategic investments that safeguard northern industries and jobs, reduce trade-related disruptions, and create new opportunities for long-term economic growth.

As the NOHFC looks toward 2026–27 and beyond, it remains steadfast in its mission to foster economic development across Northern Ontario.

Many northern Ontario communities are smaller in population size, experiencing transitioning employment situations, and have a limited tax base that are more in need than others. To make the biggest impact, we need to be assessing where and how our support can make a real difference, and how we can ensure there's support for these communities.

Through targeted investments that transform innovative ideas into meaningful outcomes, NOHFC will continue to drive growth, support job creation and retention, and reinforce the resilience of northern communities especially during times of economic uncertainty. These efforts will ultimately enhance the quality of life for residents and contribute to a stronger, more sustainable northern economy.

The 2026-27 Business Plan details the key priorities and objectives that NOHFC will pursue to fulfill the priorities identified in the Letter of Direction from the Minister of Northern Economic Development and Growth regarding innovative client service, sustainability, accountability, and priorities specific to NOHFC, including:

- Increasing awareness of the NOHFC's strategic economic focus while supporting broader community and organization participation in its programming to achieve economic outcomes;
- Continuing to provide superior client service;
- Bringing forward short- and long-term measures to deliver funding more efficiently and effectively particularly to deliver priority projects faster;
- Implementing options throughout all organization activities to reflect the preference for Ontario or Canadian businesses; and

- Responding to recommendations identified in the Mandate Review of the NOHFC undertaken in fiscal year 2024-25.

Northern Ontario's workers, businesses, and communities are supported through a targeted strategy outlined in Ontario's *Plan to Protect Ontario*¹, which addresses the impacts of U.S. tariffs and ongoing economic uncertainty. The NOHFC will continue to play a vital role in strengthening and protecting Northern Ontario's economy by providing financial support to businesses, municipalities, Indigenous communities, and non-profit organizations, helping to build a more competitive, resilient, and self-reliant regional economy.



John Guerard
Executive Director
Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation

¹ Plan to Protect Ontario, Ontario Budget, 2025

Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation Mandate

NOHFC is an operational service agency established under the enabling legislation of the *Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Act*². Oversight of NOHFC falls within the mandate of the Ministry of Northern Economic Development and Growth (MNEDG). NOHFC, as a Board-governed agency, has an appointed Board of Directors, and the Minister of Northern Development is the Board Chair.

NOHFC's objectives are set out in the *Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Act* as follows:

- I. To advise and make recommendations to the Lieutenant Governor in Council on any matter relating to the growth and diversification of the economy of Northern Ontario;
- II. To promote and stimulate economic initiatives in Northern Ontario; and
- III. To commission studies and enter into contracts in connection with the objects set out in clauses (I.) and (II.) above.

NOHFC delivers financial assistance through programs that offer conditional contributions and loans to businesses, municipalities, Indigenous communities, and non-profit organizations. This provincial support for NOHFC recognizes the vital role NOHFC will continue to play as Northern Ontario moves toward long-term economic growth.

NOHFC's funding programs are:

- I. Community Enhancement Program;
- II. Invest North Program;
- III. People and Talent Program; and
- IV. Cultural Supports Program.

1.1 Strategic Direction: NOHFC Letter of Direction for 2026-27

In October 2025, the Honourable George Pirie, Minister of Northern Economic Development and Growth, provided a letter of direction to NOHFC's Vice-Chair of the Board of Directors with the expectation that NOHFC continues to act in the best interests of the people of Ontario and ensure value for money is provided to taxpayers. To fulfill this directive, NOHFC will prioritize the following areas:

1. Protect Ontario

- Expand domestic partnerships within Canada, to promote the development of supply chains and economic opportunities across Canada and support economic resilience, particularly in light of ongoing U.S. tariff threats and economic uncertainty.
- Procure from Ontario and Canadian businesses whenever feasible.

² *Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Act*

2. Deliver Better Services

- Focus on a user-centered client / customer experience by simplifying interactions, improving satisfaction, and expanding and optimizing digital service offerings.
- Identify opportunities to enhance efficiency, improve services, drive innovation, and achieve cost savings for the people of Ontario, including through the use of AI and other advanced technologies.
- Eliminate unnecessary bureaucracy and red tape by applying lean methodologies or other modalities to achieve operational efficiency.

3. Drive Innovation & Value for Money

- Find innovative solutions to use public resources efficiently and to effectively deliver on the agency's mandate while operating within the agency's financial allocation, supported by accurate financial reporting, effective internal controls, and proactive fraud management practices.

In addition, NOHFC has received direction on additional priorities specific to the NOHFC, which include:

1. Increasing awareness of the NOHFC's strategic economic focus while supporting broader community and organization participation in its programming to achieve economic outcomes.
2. Continuing to provide superior client service.
3. Bringing forward short and long-term measures to deliver funding more efficiently and effectively particularly to deliver priority projects faster.
4. Implementing options throughout all organization activities to reflect the preference for Ontario or Canadian businesses.
5. Responding to recommendations identified in the Mandate Review of the NOHFC undertaken in fiscal year 2024-25.

1.2 Key Initiatives to Meet Letter of Direction Expectations

NOHFC's business plan for 2026-27 describes the planned activities of the agency, incorporating direction from the Minister of Northern Economic Development and Growth as outlined in section 1.1 above.

Protect Ontario

NOHFC will:

- Prioritize investments that safeguard northern industries and jobs, address trade disruptions, and support long-term economic growth;
- Strive to keep workers employed and help Northern Ontario businesses grow despite U.S. tariffs;
- Continue to fund projects that strengthen the economy and help communities adapt to trade-related challenges; and

- Maintain a focus on driving innovation, supporting job creation, and fostering sustainable economic development in Northern Ontario.

Deliver Better Services

NOHFC will:

- Strengthen performance tracking and oversight of NOHFC services, including those provided by NOHFC's service providers, through NOHFC's new information technology platform to support and improve service delivery;
- Ensure client data remains protected through ongoing cybersecurity reviews and protocols;
- Seek ministry approval prior to any use of artificial intelligence;
- Report all high-risk issues to the ministry facing NOHFC with effective mitigation plans;
- Continue to improve transparency through open data initiatives and NOHFC website updates; and
- Apply lean methodologies and digital tools to streamline workflows, enhance data-driven decision-making, and improve client experience while fostering a culture of continuous improvement and collaboration.

Drive Innovation & Value for Money

NOHFC will:

- Continue delivering support programs using hybrid application intake and due diligence models, with ongoing reviews to improve sustainability, innovation, and timely funding decisions;
- Assess organizational capacity within financial allocations to strengthen service delivery, including digital access, data-driven decision-making, and efficient program models; and
- Enhance access to targeted programs for Indigenous, rural, and remote communities through improved advisory services and efforts to leverage additional investments for economic growth.

Specific Priorities of NOHFC

NOHFC will:

- Increase awareness of the NOHFC's strategic economic focus while supporting broader community and organization participation in its programming to achieve economic outcomes;
- Continue to provide superior client service;
- Bring forward short- and long-term measures to deliver funding more efficiently and effectively particularly to deliver priority projects faster;
- Implement options throughout all organization activities to reflect the preference for Ontario or Canadian businesses; and
- Respond to recommendations identified in the NOHFC Mandate Review undertaken by the ministry in fiscal year 2024-25.

1.3. NOHFC Strategic Plan

NOHFC's strategic plan was developed by the NOHFC Board of Directors in consultation with NOHFC's administration and the Ministry of Northern Economic Development and Growth. Reviewed annually by the NOHFC Board of Directors, the plan sets out NOHFC's strategic framework, including the vision, mission, guiding principles, and strategic priorities.

Vision

NOHFC will be a catalyst for key strategic investments to stimulate economic development and diversification in Northern Ontario.

Mission

To partner with communities, not-for-profits, businesses, and entrepreneurs across Northern Ontario to create jobs and strengthen the economy.

Guiding Principles

The following principles provide overall program direction throughout NOHFC's day-to-day operations, irrespective of changes in its goals, requirements, or resources.

I. Recognition of Northern Ontario's Unique Circumstances

NOHFC programs and initiatives will continue to be an important means of recognizing Northern Ontario's unique needs, in the support of a strong, resilient Ontario.

II. Adaptability

The strategic planning process is an ongoing activity that provides NOHFC with a management tool for adapting to changes in the future.

III. Reflective, Flexible, and Forward-Thinking

NOHFC's Board of Directors review the strategic priorities and plans, at minimum, on an annual basis.

IV. Inclusiveness

NOHFC will develop and deliver its programs and initiatives in a manner that recognizes the needs of the North's diverse communities, including, but not limited to, Indigenous communities.

1.4. Strategic Priorities

NOHFC continues to provide financial support to the following strategic initiatives:

Innovation, Research and Development, and Commercialization

Support applied research and development projects and initiatives that lead to innovative products and services with commercialization potential by:

- Supporting and encouraging partnerships among educational institutions,

research organizations, and industry to develop and grow innovative products and industries in Northern Ontario; and

- Supporting the commercialization of ideas and innovation in partnership with northern stakeholders / partners.

Creativity, Productivity, and Entrepreneurial Development

Support an environment that promotes creativity, productivity, and entrepreneurial development by:

- Supporting collaboration with educational institutions and industry to promote productivity and entrepreneurial development;
- Assisting northern stakeholders / partners to attract and retain a highly skilled and creative workforce; and
- Assisting entrepreneurs at various stages of their business' growth.

Partnerships and Collaboration

Maximize opportunities to leverage NOHFC support through partnerships and collaboration to ensure the success of projects and sustainable economic outcomes by:

- Engaging leaders in Northern Ontario, including economic development professionals, to increase awareness, knowledge of, and access to NOHFC programs;
- Supporting projects that demonstrate collaboration and partnership amongst public and private sector organizations in Northern Ontario; and
- Working with other funding partners to help develop and fund projects that result in job creation and support a growing and sustainable Northern Ontario economy.

Furthermore, internally, NOHFC will continue to focus on:

Organization Development and Renewal

Engaging in continuous improvement and human resource development to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, access to, and delivery of NOHFC programs, as well as improve performance measurement by:

- Continuing to develop information technology capabilities and enhance existing systems to improve client ease of access to NOHFC programs and internal access to program delivery metrics and statistics;
- Enhancing regular, ongoing dialogue with NOHFC's Board of Directors to plan and anticipate new and emerging opportunities and key government initiatives;
- Developing business approaches and best practices that allow NOHFC and its program delivery partners to proactively communicate and work with stakeholders / partners to promote and facilitate access to NOHFC programs; and
- Providing the tools and training to enable NOHFC and the NOHFC Board of Directors to fulfill their roles and responsibilities effectively in an increasingly demanding environment.

Awareness, Education, and Recognition

Renew marketing, communication, and outreach tools that increase awareness, understanding, and recognition of NOHFC and its programs, applications, and other processes by developing effective marketing and communications tools that increase awareness and recognition of NOHFC and its support programs, with a focus on promoting applications to the business streams that drive jobs and growth.

2.0 Northern Ontario Economic Landscape

NOHFC ensures strategic allocation of program funding through constant surveillance of the economic landscape of Ontario with a focus on Northern Ontario. The province continues to navigate economic fluctuations due to geo-political events, supply chain challenges, ongoing labour shortages, and other challenges. These economic circumstances and other world events can have a magnified impact on the demographic, economic, and labour market indicators of Northern Ontario in both the short and long-term.

Northern Ontario remains heavily reliant on public sector employment, with health care and social assistance, education, and public administration making up the largest sectors by employment share (estimated at 33.6 per cent of the North's total employment in 2025, compared to 24.6 per cent provincially)³.

In addition to public sector employment, many of the region's communities continue to depend on primary industries such as mining and forestry, which accounted for 6.9 per cent of the North's total employment in August 2025, compared to only 0.5 per cent for the province⁴. Northern Ontario continues to see growth and diversification of its economy. However, the region continues to rely on the primary resource extraction sectors that are tied to global commodity prices and market demand.

Additional innovation and diversification of value-added opportunities in these sectors, as well as building on existing clusters and the expertise related to primary industries, help the northern economy withstand boom / bust cycles in primary resource sectors. A resilient economy will support the vital infrastructure and strong communities that attract people to live and work in Northern Ontario.

³ Statistics Canada Table 14-10-0465-01 dated September 5, 2025, Annual Labour Force Characteristics, Release date January 1, 2024

⁴ Statistics Canada Table 14-10-0465-01 dated September 5, 2025, Annual Labour Force Characteristics, Release date January 1, 2024

Northern Ontario Demographics and Workforce

Northern Ontario continues to experience workforce challenges, including the aging population, youth out-migration, and a shortage of skilled workers in several sectors. The future labour force supply will be essential to drive Northern Ontario's economic growth.

In August 2025, the Ontario Ministry of Finance released the Ontario population projections for the period of 2024-2051. Those projections indicate that Northern Ontario's population will grow slowly, increasing 13.6 per cent from 871,000 in 2024, to 989,000 by 2051. Northeastern Ontario is projected to see population growth of approximately 84,000, or 13.6 per cent, from 620,000 to 704,000, and Northwestern Ontario is projected to experience growth of 34,000, or 13.7 per cent, from 250,000 to 285,000⁵.

Northern Ontario's core working age (25-34 years old) cohort is projected to grow by 66,000 (20.5 per cent), from 321,000 in 2024, to 387,000 in 2051. Northeastern Ontario is projected to see a growth of 45,000 (19.9 per cent), and Northwestern Ontario's projected growth is 21,000 (22 per cent).

NOHFC supports population growth by creating and maintaining employment opportunities and supporting the development of a skilled workforce to help new and existing businesses and workers succeed in Northern Ontario, strengthening both the economy and communities. Since June 2018, NOHFC has invested more than \$1 billion in 8,079 projects in Northern Ontario, leveraging more than \$3 billion in investment and creating or sustaining over 12,500 jobs.

Mining and Mining Support Services

Mining in Ontario, including the mining of critical minerals, directly employs approximately 28,000 people and employes another 46,000 in mineral processing and mining supplies and services⁶. Approximately two-thirds of direct mining jobs are in Northern Ontario⁷. The sector has one of the highest proportions of Indigenous workers in Ontario, and many benefits from Ontario's direct mining employment occur in Northern Ontario.⁸ The broader mining supply and services cluster includes over 1,400 companies and employs more than 40,000 people, contributing \$3.9 billion towards Ontario's GDP annually.⁹ In

⁵ Ontario Ministry of Finance 2023-2051 Population Projections October 1, 2024-August 1, 2025

⁶ Statistics Canada. Table 36-10-0489-01 Labour statistics consistent with the System of National Accounts (SNA), by job category and industry, and PwC. Pan-Ontario Mining Supply and Services Sector Economic Impact Study.

⁷ Statistics Canada. Table 98-10-0456-01 Place of work status by industry sectors, occupation broad category and gender: Canada provinces and territories, census divisions and census subdivisions.

⁸ Mining Industry Human Resources Council Monthly Labour Market Dashboard

⁹ PwC, Pan-Ontario Mining Supply and Services Sector Economic Impact Study, 2014

2024, Ontario's mining industry provided direct mining employees with approximately \$4.3 billion in total compensation.¹⁰

Since 2018, NOHFC has supported 288 projects in minerals and mining supplies and services, with a total investment of \$64 million and leveraging an additional \$148 million in Northern Ontario, helping to create or sustain 958 jobs.¹¹ This money has helped to strengthen a crucial economic sector, supporting success and growth in the region.

Forestry

Ontario's forest sector generated \$21.6 billion in revenue and contributed \$5.4 billion to Ontario's GDP (2023) and exported \$8 billion worth of forestry products (2024). The sector continues to be an important employer across all regions of Ontario and directly employs 42,500 people, supporting approximately 128,000 jobs¹². Approximately 9,300 people in Northern Ontario were employed directly by the forestry industry in 2024. Approximately one in four northern communities depends significantly on the forest sector for employment income¹³.

Ontario's 20 largest sawmills operate in Northern Ontario and produce 97 per cent of the province's lumber. While Ontario's primary forest sector is mainly located in the North, it provides a foundation for a large secondary and value-added manufacturing sector located in Southern Ontario.

Ongoing trade challenges from the U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC) and an increase in softwood lumber duties, along with additional looming potential tariffs, continue to create instability. A weak housing market resulting in low demand and prices is compounding the situation. On August 8, 2025, the DOC completed the sixth administrative review of the current softwood lumber dispute, which resulted in a significant increase in duties on Canadian softwood lumber exports, from 14.40 per cent to 35.16 per cent. Since 2017, Ontario's softwood lumber producers paid an estimated \$1.1 billion in duties, and the amount will continue to grow until the dispute is resolved through a negotiated settlement.

In September 2024, the Ontario government released a progress update on the Ontario Forest Sector Strategy, highlighting new investment and achievements¹⁴. Ontario has

¹⁰ Statistics Canada. Table 36-10-0489-01 Labour statistics consistent with the System of National Accounts (SNA), by job category and industry

¹¹ NOHFC approved projects as of October 2025

¹² Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources

¹³ [Ontario's Forestry Sector Strategy, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources](#)

¹⁴ [Ontario's Forest Sector Strategy Progress Report 2024, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources](#)

70.48 million hectares of forest and 27.7 million hectares of managed Crown forests, and harvests 0.1 million hectares of Crown forest annually. In 2024, the province committed an additional \$60 million over three years through the Forest Biomass Program to expand Crown wood utilization and support innovation¹⁵.

Since 2018, NOHFC has supported 263 projects in the forestry sector, with an investment totalling \$54 million and leveraging an additional \$254 million in Northern Ontario¹⁶. NOHFC will continue working with forestry stakeholders and partners to meet the challenges and opportunities of this sector, providing relevant, responsive programs designed for Northern Ontario's economy.

Agriculture

According to Statistics Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness (OMAFRA), agriculture-related businesses employed 27,820 people in Northern Ontario in 2021. Northern Ontario farm cash receipts for goods produced totalled approximately \$238.3 million in 2024 (not including aquaculture operations)¹⁷.

Ontario's agri-food sector is comprised of primary agriculture, food, beverage, and tobacco processing / manufacturing, wholesale, and retail and food services. Northern Ontario's 1,782 farms utilized 711,263 acres of farmland to grow crops and raise livestock. The number of farms in Northern Ontario represents approximately 3.7 per cent of the provincial total. The two largest sub-sectors of Northern Ontario's agriculture sector are dairy products, and cattle and beef, representing 41 per cent of the total 2024 cash receipts in Northern Ontario.

Although aquaculture is not captured in agriculture census data, it is the third largest agriculture production sub-sector in Northern Ontario with approximately \$38.1 million in cash receipts in 2024. Northern Ontario aquaculture represents more than 90 per cent of Ontario's open-water-net-pen rainbow trout production with an estimated value of \$36 million¹⁸.

Since 2018, NOHFC has supported 562 projects in the agricultural, aquaculture, and food processing sectors, with a total investment of \$71 million, leveraging \$131 million in additional investment for Northern Ontario.

Since 2018, NOHFC has supported 31 projects for 404 producers and has increased productivity on 24,490 acres of arable land in Northern Ontario, with a total investment of \$25 million, resulting in more productive growing seasons and increased crop yields for producers.

¹⁵ [Ontario's Forest Biomass Program, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources](#)

¹⁶ NOHFC approved projects as of October 2025

¹⁷ Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness

¹⁸ Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness

Tourism

In 2023, visitor spending in Northern Ontario is estimated to have supported 11,000 jobs (7,700 direct, 1,500 indirect, and 1,600 induced) based on \$1.3 billion of domestic spending, contributing \$0.9 billion to Northern Ontario's GDP¹⁹.

In 2024, tourism-related businesses accounted for seven per cent of all business establishments in Northern Ontario (Ontario's Tourism Region #13 (RTO13)). Compared to other industries in Ontario, tourism-related industries employ higher proportions of women, young people, and students.

Northern Ontario attracted a higher proportion of overnight trips than the Ontario average, and nature-based tourism is the most dominant type of tourism across the three sub-regions that comprise the RTO13 (Northeast, Central, and Northwest). Over one-third (41 per cent) of domestic tourist visits in Northern Ontario included participation in an outdoor or sports activity in 2023. These outdoor activities include fishing (11 per cent of visits), boating (15 per cent of visits), and camping (13 per cent of visits).

A significant segment of Northern Ontario's tourism industry relies heavily on the U.S. traveller. As part of supporting the North, Destination Ontario's northern marketing programs and activities will continue to focus on both avid and leisure American travellers, while continuing efforts in Ontario and other source Canadian markets.

Northern Ontario tourism has experienced a downturn in U.S. visitation since the political tension with the U.S. escalated in early 2025. Northern ports-of-entry were all reflecting a moderate drop: Pigeon River (down 9.7 per cent), Fort Frances (down seven per cent), Rainy River (down five per cent), and Sault Ste. Marie (down 6.6 per cent).

Additionally, there were significant net job losses in Northern Ontario's accommodation and food services sector in 2024, compared to 2023 (down 2,700 jobs, or 15 per cent). In 2024, hotel occupancy in Northern Ontario showed divergent trends compared to 2023: Sudbury (up 4.9 percentage points), Thunder Bay (down 2.8 percentage points), Sault Ste. Marie (down 0.1 percentage points), and North Bay (up 1.6 percentage points).

Since 2018, NOHFC has supported 1,075 projects in the tourism sector, with a total investment of \$161 million, and leveraged \$413 million in additional investment for Northern Ontario²⁰.

Arts, Culture, and Creative Industries

Film and television production is thriving throughout the province, creating jobs and economic impact for local suppliers, vendors, and talent. In 2024, Ontario's film and

¹⁹ Calculated using the Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model (TREIM)

²⁰ NOHFC approvals as of October 2025

television industry contributed \$2.6 billion to the economy, creating nearly 35,000 full-time equivalent direct and spin-off jobs for Ontarians.

Ontario continues to demonstrate strong support for its arts and culture sector through substantial investments, strategic funding programs, and initiatives that promote cultural engagement and economic development across the province. These supports include:

- The Ontario government is investing nearly \$1 billion in three competitive and uncapped film and television tax credits for 2025–26, aimed at attracting both domestic and international productions.²¹
- Additional funding includes \$7 million for the music industry, over \$28 million for public libraries, and nearly \$5 million for community museums.
- The Ontario Arts Council (OAC) remains the primary arts funding body, distributing \$52.2 million through over 3,000 grants to artists and organizations in 2024–25.
- The Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund (OCAF) provided \$3 million to 61 cultural tourism projects to boost attendance and economic impact.
- The Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF) invested \$10 million in culture-related community initiatives as part of its broader \$100 million annual funding.
- Ontario Culture Days organizes a free, province-wide, three-week festival each fall to celebrate arts, culture, and heritage.

NOHFC has provided financial support for a wide range of film and television productions, with total production values ranging from \$40,000 to \$55 million, directly influencing the growth of this industry in Northern Ontario. NOHFC funding is limited to those costs of the production that are spent in Northern Ontario, including labour costs, production goods and services, and post-production costs.

While Sudbury, North Bay, and Sault Ste. Marie host most productions in Northern Ontario, other frequently used locations include Timmins, Thunder Bay, and Parry Sound.

Productions supported by NOHFC continue to showcase Northern Ontario's film and television industry. Recent NOHFC investments have supported television series such as *SkyMed*, *Letterkenny*, *Shoresy*, *When Hope Calls*, and several acclaimed films that premiered at the 2025 Toronto International Film Festival, including *Blood Lines*, *Aki*, and *Peak Everything*.

Since 2018, NOHFC has supported over 983 projects in arts, culture, and creative industries sector, with a total investment of \$220 million, and leveraged \$1.1 billion in additional investment for Northern Ontario²².

²¹ *Ontario Film and Television Production 2022-2024 By Format*, Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Gaming

²² Arts, Culture and Creative Industries, MTCG, September 2025

Manufacturing

The manufacturing sector is a significant contributor to Northern Ontario's economy with approximately 623 manufacturing enterprises employing approximately 22,500 workers in 2024, representing six per cent of the region's total employment. With a seven per cent decrease in manufacturing employment, the 2024 level remains below its 2015 peak. The sector contributed \$2.4 billion (seven per cent) to Northern Ontario's GDP in 2023²³.

Advanced manufacturing includes companies that utilize innovative applications such as leading-edge robotics, automation, and computer-integrated manufacturing to develop their products. New manufacturing techniques and equipment, combined with information technology and micro-electronics, have resulted in innovative manufacturing processes used in northern companies. This includes firms involved with the mining, telecommunications, chemicals and plastics, transportation (rail and aerospace), food processing, and automotive parts sectors.

The opportunities generated by the continued growth of manufacturing in Northern Ontario will continue to rely on a dependable supply and well-trained, highly skilled workers. Employers, tradespeople, and students all need ready access to state-of-the-art training and education to stay current on new technology and its application to a variety of manufacturing processes.

The continued development and adoption of innovative applications and technologies will ensure that northern companies remain competitive in global markets.

Since 2018, NOHFC has supported 541 projects in the advanced manufacturing sector, with a total investment of \$124 million, and leveraged \$484 million in additional investment for Northern Ontario²⁴.

Communities and Infrastructure

At the core of a successful Northern Ontario are strong, vibrant communities. Northern Ontario includes 144 municipalities, 106 First Nations, Métis communities, and more than 150 unincorporated communities.

For businesses and organizations to thrive, communities require core services and infrastructure that not only serve northern communities but enhance communities' ability to attract skilled labour, professionals, and businesses. Support for community infrastructure is a key component in Northern Ontario's economic landscape. NOHFC continues to support incremental improvements, repairs, and / or renovations that contribute to healthy and vibrant communities.

Since 2018, NOHFC has supported 781 community enhancement projects, with a total

²³ Statistics Canada Annual Employment by Industry

²⁴ NOHFC approval projects as of October 2025

investment of \$337 million, and leveraged \$708 million in additional investment for Northern Ontario²⁵.

3.0. Ministry of Northern Economic Development and Growth Mandate, Priorities, and Initiatives

Mandate

The Ministry of Northern Economic Development and Growth (MNEDG) works to advance economic and community development in Northern Ontario through collaborative partnerships and solutions that reflect the unique needs of the North. To accomplish that the government has undertaken several initiatives detailed below:

Priorities

- I. **Northern Economic Development**
 - Make Northern Ontario strong, healthy, and prosperous for the benefit of all Ontarians, including Indigenous peoples.
 - Increase economic opportunities through innovation, collaboration, and reducing barriers for business while developing, adapting, and delivering economic and community development programs and services in the North.
- II. **Service Delivery Excellence and Modernization**
 - Deliver programs, services, and experiences to Ontarians that are faster, better, simpler, and responsive to their needs by adopting digital approaches utilizing data-informed decision-making and increasing efficiency.
 - Create a culture of continuous improvement to ensure public services are delivered efficiently and effectively.
- III. **Organizational Leadership**
 - Build a workplace culture that is responsible, innovative, and collaborative, and where employees are valued, engaged, and can actively support a respectful, equitable, accessible, diverse, and inclusive organization that is anti-racist and free from discrimination and harassment.
 - Accountable for effective, efficient, and ethical management of resources and making fiscally responsible decisions.

Initiatives

- Provide advice, information, and support to ministry partners and the government in the development and delivery of government policies, programs, and services in the North, with a focus on northern and regional knowledge and perspectives.
- Assist northern municipalities, communities, and Indigenous peoples to develop and grow economic development capacity, enhance quality of life, maintain their

²⁵ NOHFC approvals as of August 23, 2024

economic viability, and reach their full economic potential.

- Provide leadership and input to economic development policies and implement actions to achieve results consistent with government priorities.
- Provide fiscal and accountability oversight, direction, and support to the government's planned approach for the NOHFC.
- Assist and support business start-ups and companies located in Northern Ontario to grow and expand their business.
- Identify and prioritize strategic investments in transportation, community, and other critical infrastructure, including road infrastructure, in Northern Ontario, building on established partnerships with other ministries and governments.
- Assist northern communities to identify, promote, and secure economic development opportunities that foster regional economic growth by supporting investment attraction, economic diversification, and job creation.

3.1. Ontario Government Priorities

In May 2025, the Ontario government released the 2025 budget: *A Plan to Protect Ontario*. The 2025 budget includes measures to protect Ontario workers, businesses, and jobs in the face of U.S. tariffs and continued economic uncertainty, with a plan to build an economy that is more resilient and self-reliant. The budget furthers the government's goal to transform Ontario into the most competitive place to invest, create jobs, and do business in the G7, while investing more in health care, education, and other critical services²⁶.

Ontario is boosting competitiveness by supporting manufacturing investment, expanding interprovincial trade, increasing electricity capacity, encouraging innovation, and helping small businesses grow. The province is also unlocking critical minerals to fuel industry and build essential infrastructure.

Key initiatives outlined in the 2025 Ontario Budget: *A Plan to Protect Ontario* aim to unlock Northern Ontario's economic potential and include the following:

Ontario's Response to U.S. Tariffs

The imposition of U.S. tariffs presents a significant economic threat to Ontario, particularly impacting key sectors such as automotive, steel, and forestry. U.S. trade protectionism presents challenges for Ontario businesses, particularly those with integrated cross-border supply chains. These measures are expected to result in job losses, increased consumer costs, and disruptions across communities. At the same time, it creates new opportunities for diversification and market expansion. Ontario is addressing the impact of U.S. tariffs by providing targeted support to workers, businesses, and communities, while strengthening the province's long-term economic capacity. This includes strengthening internal trade, investing in infrastructure, and accelerating critical mineral

²⁶ Plan to Protect Ontario, Ontario Budget, 2025

and resource development particularly in the Ring of Fire to enhance Ontario's competitiveness, attract investment, and support job creation.²⁷

In response, Ontario is implementing a comprehensive strategy to support affected industries and communities, while enhancing the province's economic resilience and competitiveness. This includes:

- **Protect Ontario Financing Program:** Up to \$1 billion in liquidity support for businesses in steel, aluminum, and auto sectors to maintain operations and protect jobs.
- **Trade-Impacted Communities Program (TICP):** \$40 million in flexible grants beginning in 2025–26. This funding will support projects that help communities respond to trade disruptions and pivot to procurement from domestic and local suppliers where possible. The program will also support large-scale strategic initiatives that enable and transform key sectors and industrial clusters to help businesses grow, find new markets and investments, and diversify their supply chains.
- **Ontario Together Trade Fund:** \$50 million to help small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) re-shore supply chains, expand interprovincial markets, and build trade resilience.
- **Interprovincial Trade Leadership:** Through the *Protect Ontario Through Free Trade Within Canada Act*, Ontario has signed memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with 10 provinces and territories, with interprovincial trade now representing nearly 30 per cent of provincial GDP.²⁸
- **International Trade Expansion:** Ontario has opened new Trade and Investment Offices in Southeast Asia and appointed an Agent-General to the region.²⁹ The Canada–Indonesia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) eliminates tariffs on nearly all of Ontario's key exports, supporting trade diversification and investment attraction.³⁰
- **Federal Partnership:** The Government of Canada has launched a \$6.5 billion Regional Tariff Response Initiative, delivered through FedNor and regional development agencies, to support SMEs in sectors most affected by tariffs.³¹

These coordinated efforts aim to safeguard Ontario's economic interests, support workers and businesses, and position the province for long-term growth in a shifting global trade environment.

²⁷ Plan to Protect Ontario, Ontario Budget, 2025

²⁸ News release, Ontario Signs New Free Trade Agreements with British Columbia and Canada's Three Territories, July 21, 2025

²⁹ News release, Province Appoints New Agent-General in Southeast Asia, June 9, 2025

³⁰ News release, Prime Minister Carney announces new trade agreement with Indonesia-Canada's first bilateral trade agreement with an ASEAN country, September 24, 2025

³¹ News release, The Government of Canada launches new response to protect build, and transform Northern Ontario businesses, September 19, 2025.

Unlocking the Economic Potential of Ontario's Critical Minerals

The imposition of U.S. tariffs has highlighted the urgent need to bolster Ontario's economic resilience. This includes greater emphasis on domestically sourced critical minerals to maintain secure supply chains and unleash Ontario's economy. Rapidly changing technologies are, in turn, increasing the global demand for critical minerals, which have become important to strategic industries, including in the defence, aerospace, automotive, and energy sectors.

Unlocking the Ring of Fire

The Ring of Fire is one of Ontario's greatest assets in the face of economic threats from the U.S. The Ring of Fire contains one of the most promising mineral development opportunities in the world, representing enormous economic potential. The region includes reserves of chromite, copper, cobalt, nickel, platinum, and many other critical minerals that play a significant role in supporting innovative technologies, including electronics, EVs, and cleantech.

In April 2025, Ontario introduced the *Protect Ontario by Unleashing Our Economy Act* to streamline approvals via a One Project, One Process model cutting review times by 50 per cent. The province is also seeking federal recognition of provincial and Indigenous-led assessments.

Improving Access to the Ring of Fire

Developing key infrastructure, including all-season, dependable road access, is a critical step to unlocking economic opportunities and benefits in the Ring of Fire.

This includes advancing all-season road projects such as the Marten Falls Community Access Road, Webequie Supply Road, and Northern Road Link to connect First Nation communities to the provincial highway network for the first time. Key highway upgrades in Greenstone were completed in November 2024, and a historic agreement with Aroland First Nation announced in January 2025 enables road construction along the full route to the Ring of Fire. Additionally, the province is investing \$11.9 million in 2025–26 to expand broadband access to five remote Matawa-member communities, supporting education, healthcare, and economic development.

Investing in Critical Minerals

Ontario is strengthening its commitment to the critical minerals sector with a series of strategic investments aimed at driving innovation, exploration, and Indigenous economic participation.

In support, Ontario launched a \$500 million Critical Minerals Processing Fund (CMPF) to

support the development and expansion of processing facilities, ensuring minerals mined in Ontario are also refined locally. This initiative will drive job creation, attract private investment, and unlock new opportunities, particularly in Indigenous and northern communities such as Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury, North Bay, and Timmins.

To further support early-stage exploration, Ontario is investing an additional \$10 million in 2025–26, to extend the Ontario Junior Exploration Program (OJEP). This builds on \$35 million already committed, helping 84 companies—62 focused on critical minerals—advance future mining projects and economic growth.

Ontario is also enhancing innovation through the Critical Minerals Innovation Fund (CMIF), with an additional \$5 million over two years to support technologies in exploration, mining, and recovery. A new regulation under the *Mining Act*, effective July 1, 2025, will make Ontario the first Canadian jurisdiction to streamline permitting for recovering residual minerals from mine waste, unlocking resources like lithium, cobalt, and platinum.

To strengthen Indigenous partnerships, Ontario launched the \$3 billion Indigenous Opportunities Financing Program (IOFP) and is investing \$70 million over four years in the Indigenous Participation Fund to support engagement in mineral exploration. An additional \$10 million over three years will fund scholarships for First Nation students pursuing careers in resource development.

Together, these investments reinforce Ontario’s commitment to building a resilient, integrated supply chain and positioning the province as a competitive destination for innovation and global investment.

Supporting Ontario’s Forest Sector

Forestry is a key economic driver in Ontario, with Crown forests covering nearly two-thirds of the province. The sector supports jobs and investment, especially in Indigenous, northern, and rural communities. The government remains committed to sustainable forest management and promoting the responsible use of Ontario’s natural resources.

Ontario is investing in the long-term resilience of the forest sector with \$6 million in 2025–26, to expand Forest Access Roads in Northern Ontario, supporting economic development and infrastructure for Indigenous, public, and commercial users. An additional \$2.4 million over three years will support the Forest Sector Strategy, promoting innovative construction projects and better utilization of Crown timber.

Through the \$60 million Forest Biomass Program, Ontario is advancing the use of underutilized wood and mill byproducts to:

- Increase harvest volumes for traditional and innovative products;
- Support regional economies and forest operations; and
- Collaborate with municipalities, industry, and Indigenous communities to identify future uses for wood.

Strengthening Ontario's Agri-Food Sector

Promoting Agri-Food Stability Through Ontario's Risk Management Program

Ontario has a rich and diverse agri-food sector that produces over 200 agricultural commodities, with 60 per cent of the food produced in Ontario being processed and consumed in the province. Promoting Agri-Food Stability through Ontario's Risk Management Program (RMP), including Self-Directed Risk Management (SDRM), helps Ontario farmers compete globally by providing support for risks beyond their control. This helps ensure the predictability and stability needed for agri-food businesses to invest and grow at a time when the threat of tariffs and other market instability on the sector are creating additional risks. In January 2025, Ontario announced an increase in annual funding for the RMP, from \$150 million to \$250 million over a three-year period, starting with a \$30 million increase for the 2025 program year.

Increasing Ontario's RMP will support farmers in responding to market challenges while boosting their long-term business confidence and competitiveness. The RMP supports over 383,000 jobs and \$24 billion throughout Ontario's agri-food supply chain across 8,500 farms, when they are facing challenges such as fluctuating market prices and extreme weather events like flooding, drought, or disease.

4.0. Overview of NOHFC's Current Programs

NOHFC's programs enable clients to pursue investing in their businesses; build strong and resilient northern communities; attract, retain, and develop Northern Ontario's workforce; and showcase Northern Ontario's culture, geography, and talent, while supporting economic growth and development.

Invest North Program

The Invest North Program is designed to boost economic growth in Northern Ontario by encouraging businesses to invest in transformative, strategic, and complementary business development opportunities in northern communities.

The program supports productivity, innovation, business competitiveness, revenue growth, export capacity development, and job creation and retention through six program streams:

- **Innovation:** supports the research, development, and commercialization of new and innovative technologies in Northern Ontario.
- **Innovation – Industrial Research Chair:** establishes and enhances research capacity at Northern Ontario universities, colleges, and research institutions.

- **Investment – Launch:** helps to launch new businesses in Northern Ontario.
- **Investment – Grow:** helps to grow existing businesses in Northern Ontario.
- **Investment – Locate:** helps to locate new business operations to Northern Ontario.
- **Regional Tile Drainage:** supports the agriculture sector in installing tile drainage to improve the quality of arable land in Northern Ontario, resulting in more productive growing seasons and increased crop yields.

People and Talent Program

The People and Talent Program is designed to attract, retain, and develop Northern Ontario’s workforce by targeting new entrants into the workforce, those transitioning to a new career, the unemployed, and underemployed. This includes hiring apprentices under a registered apprenticeship program.

The People and Talent Program is comprised of two funding streams:

- **Indigenous Workforce Development:** strengthens and develops Northern Ontario’s Indigenous workforce through business partnerships by offering internships to Indigenous persons.
- **Workforce Development:** strengthens and develops Northern Ontario’s workforce through business partnerships by offering internships.

Community Enhancement Program

The Community Enhancement Program builds strong and resilient northern communities through infrastructure investments to upgrade / repair existing assets, improving community quality of life, economic-development infrastructure, and strategic economic development initiatives. The Community Enhancement Program is comprised of two funding streams:

- **Rural Enhancement:** supports rural municipalities, Indigenous communities, not-for-profit organizations, and local services boards serving a population of less than 30,000.
- **Enhance Your Community:** supports municipalities, Indigenous communities, not-for-profit organizations, and local services boards in Northern Ontario.

Cultural Supports Program

The Cultural Supports Program showcases Northern Ontario culture, geography, and talent through event partnerships and film and television productions. The Cultural Supports Program is comprised of two funding streams:

- **Community Events:** supports organizations that host community events that increase community profile and promote economic development in Northern Ontario.
- **Film and Television:** increases industry jobs and investments for quality, original film and television productions produced in Northern Ontario, while showcasing its culture, geography, stories, and talent.

5.0. Performance Measures

Performance measures are an essential management tool for public sector organizations. Well-designed measures enable sound agency and ministry decision-making, highlight and track improvements in programs / services, and fulfill accountability requirements through reporting on results. Performance measures also signal areas needing attention and improvement and emphasize the improvement and value of the program or service.

NOHFC uses a combination of output-based, outcome-based, and program-specific performance measures to track progress toward its mandate and annual direction from the ministry.

Outcome-based measures assess the effectiveness of operations in achieving the agency's strategic goals. Because these measures reflect the intended long-term results of programs or services, NOHFC does not set performance targets for them. These are referred to as Key External Performance Measures and include indicators such as job creation and investment leverage.

Output-based measures, on the other hand, capture the volume and quality of agency activities that contribute to achieving outcomes. These are referred to as Non-Key Performance Measures, with client service satisfaction rate being the primary indicator.

For program-specific performance tracking, NOHFC applies a mix of both output and outcome measures to ensure a comprehensive view of program effectiveness and service delivery.

The following sections highlight NOHFC's performance tracking and historical results. NOHFC reports on performance measures each year in its annual report.

5.1. Key External Performance Measures

Number of Full-Time Jobs Being Created / Retained

NOHFC funding programs are ultimately focused on job creation and retention. As such, NOHFC will provide funding to projects in Northern Ontario that result in the creation and / or retention of jobs. The job creation / retention target for the current fiscal year and the duration of the plan is 2,000.

Total Job Creation		
Fiscal Year	Created & Retained Jobs	Target
2025-26 YTD	1,253 ³²	2,000

NOHFC Investment Dollars Leveraged from Other Partners

NOHFC funding programs have been designed to leverage additional external funding. This increase in investment through leverage of funding will provide opportunities to create jobs in a broad range of economic sectors in Northern Ontario. The investment leverage target for NOHFC remains at 3:1 for the duration of the plan. Therefore, for every dollar NOHFC invests, NOHFC's target is to leverage or stimulate an investment of another three dollars from other sources. However, it should be noted that NOHFC programs generally only require a 1:1 ratio as funding is generally limited to 50 per cent of eligible project costs.

Leverage Ratio		
Fiscal Year	Actual	Target
2025-6YTD	2.91 ³³	3

5.2. Non-Key Performance Measures

Client Service Satisfaction

Client service satisfaction with NOHFC and its service delivery providers is assessed on an annual basis. A survey of clients is conducted after the close of each fiscal year to measure client satisfaction of the services provided. The results provide NOHFC with feedback to assist in continuous improvement efforts of service delivery.

The results from NOHFC's client survey are summarized based upon responses from a

³² Figure includes NOHFC project investments between April 1, 2025, through to December 31, 2025

³³ Figure includes NOHFC project investments between April 1, 2025, through to December 31, 2025

wide spectrum of NOHFC client interactions. Survey recipients included clients seeking information on how to apply, those applying for funding, and those in receipt of, or declined, funding. For 2024-25, NOHFC achieved a client satisfaction rate of 86.4 per cent, which refers to clients who agree (at 22.84 per cent) or strongly agree (at 63.53 per cent) with the statement “Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of services provided by NOHFC.”

Client Satisfaction

Fiscal Year	Actual	Target
2021-22	88.5%	85%
2022-23	85.6%	85%
2023-24	86.6%	85%
2024-25	86.4%	85%

5.3. Program Specific Non-Key Performance Measures

The following non-key outcome-based measures (immediate and longer term) have been developed for NOHFC’s programs. NOHFC’s current programs have been accepting applications since February 11, 2021, with application approvals beginning in fiscal year 2021-22.

The immediate outcome performance measures reported below represent year-to-date figures for 2025-26, including all approvals from April 1, 2025, through September 30, 2025. The figures below include only projects approved under current programming, and do not include legacy program approvals.

Invest North Program

Immediate outcome: Northern Ontario businesses have access to capital and create / retain jobs in the North.

Measures:

- number of businesses supported;
- investment dollars leveraged; and
- number of jobs created / retained.

Measure	2025-26 YTD ³⁴
Number of businesses supported	69
Number of jobs created / retained	406
Investment dollars leveraged	A ratio of 4.1 or \$91.7 million in real dollars

³⁴ Figure includes NOHFC project investments between April 1, 2025, through to December 31, 2025

Longer-term outcomes: Northern Ontario businesses are growing, increasing productivity, and building capacity to innovate.

Measures:

1. Increase in Northern Ontario business growth and productivity:
 - number of business expansions / start-ups;
 - per cent of business survivorship rate; and
 - per cent change in R&D investment.
2. Increase in Northern Ontario businesses' gross margins:
 - per cent change in gross margins; and
 - increase in number of sales for Northern Ontario businesses.
3. Enhanced Northern Ontario business productivity:
 - number of new products / services offered in Northern Ontario companies.

People and Talent Program

Immediate outcome: Northern Ontario employers and internship candidates participate in NOHFC People and Talent Program, helping fill skilled worker shortages.

Measures:

1. Number of approved intern applications.
2. Number of approved Indigenous intern applications.

Measure	2025-26 YTD ³⁵
Number of approved intern applications	575
Number of approved Indigenous intern applications	63

Longer-term outcomes: Northern Ontario job seekers, including those of Indigenous ancestry, are benefitting from greater access to skills training and work experience, leading to long-term employment.

Furthermore, Northern Ontario employers are developing and benefitting from a growing skilled workforce, including trades people and professionals.

Measures:

1. Increase in number of job seekers, including those with Indigenous ancestry, benefitting from greater access to skills training and work experience, leading to long-term employment.
 - per cent change in the number of interns and apprenticeship interns hired; and

³⁵ Figure includes NOHFC project investments between April 1, 2024, through to December 31, 2025

- per cent change in the number of Indigenous interns and Indigenous apprenticeship interns hired.
2. Increase in the number of employers that develop and benefit from a growing skilled workforce.
 - per cent change in number of private-sector internships; and
 - per cent change in number of employers that hire full-time employees who participated in the program.

Community Enhancement and Cultural Supports Programs

Immediate outcome: Northern Ontario communities have access to capital to improve and modernize infrastructure, host events, and showcase northern culture, geography, and talent.

Measures:

1. Increase access to capital for Northern Ontario communities to improve and modernize infrastructure, host events, and showcase northern culture, geography, and talent.
 - number of assets improved / enhanced;
 - number of events; and
 - number of film and television productions.

Measure	2025-26 YTD ³⁶
Number of assets improved / enhanced	122
Number of events	55
Number of film and television productions	14

Longer-term outcomes: Northern Ontario community assets are modernized / improved / enhanced, events are well attended, and northern culture, geography, and talent are showcased in film and television productions.

Measures:

1. Increase in Northern Ontario community modernization, expansion, and enhancement of assets.
 - dollar value of modernized / improved / enhanced assets.
2. Attendance at Northern Ontario events.
 - number of event attendees.
3. Increase in film and television productions that showcase northern culture, geography, and / or talent.

³⁶ Figure includes NOHFC project investments between April 1, 2024, through to December 31, 2025

- per cent change in the number of film and television productions.

6.0. Marketing and Communications

NOHFC partners with the Ministry of Northern Economic Development and Growth in the planning and executing of communication outreach to increase the awareness, understanding, and recognition of NOHFC, its programs, and its processes.

Key Objectives:

- Enhance awareness of NOHFC programs and opportunities for funding support with a focus on promoting applications to the business streams that drive jobs and growth.
- Educate and engage clients to foster successful NOHFC applications and projects.
- Increase applications from a diverse range of communities and Indigenous clients.
- Strengthen partnerships and promote relationships to collaboratively deliver on government priorities.

Outcomes:

- NOHFC funding supporting more projects that produce jobs and drive economic growth.
- Deliver excellent service to clients, partners, and stakeholders / partners.
- Improve language and appearance of client and employee-facing resources to enhance understanding of program information and simplify processes.
- Increase applications for NOHFC support from a more diverse range of communities and Indigenous clients.
- Increase use of all appropriate social media marketing and web resources.
- Work with NOHFC partners to ensure clients receive enhanced guidance and support throughout the entire project funding lifecycle.

7.0. Information Technology / Electronic Service Delivery Plan

In fiscal year 2026–2027, NOHFC will continue to advance a series of strategic information management initiatives that support its ongoing modernization efforts and reinforce policies and procedures across the full information management lifecycle. These initiatives are aligned with the broader Ontario Public Service (OPS) technology strategy, which emphasizes digital transformation, enhanced cybersecurity, and improved service delivery across government.

Key activities include:

- Strengthening records and information management practices, with a continued emphasis on transitioning paper-based workflows to digital platforms and enhancing the organization, accessibility, and integrity of corporate records;
- Implementing continuous process improvements guided by LEAN methodology to optimize operational efficiency and elevate the user experience;

- Contributing to the Government of Ontario's Open Government objectives by responsibly increasing public access to NOHFC data, thereby promoting transparency, accessibility, and robust data security;
- Advancing the organization's information technology strategy, which will encompass:
 - Expansion of client-facing self-service capabilities;
 - Enhanced data protection through the migration of sensitive information to secure infrastructure within the OPS;
 - Centralization of access to general data, records, and internal resource materials;
 - Strengthening of self-service reporting and analytical tools; and
 - Identification and implementation of opportunities to improve data integrity, streamline and cleanse legacy data sets, and automate manual processes to improve consistency, reduce administrative burden, and support informed decision-making.

Collectively, these efforts will position NOHFC to operate more efficiently, securely, and transparently, while remaining aligned with provincial digital modernization priorities and delivering enhanced value to stakeholders and partners across Northern Ontario.

8.0. Resources to Meet Mandate and Strategic Direction

The following tables outline the resources needed to continue to support NOHFC's objectives.

8.1. Projected Three-year Schedule of Administrative Expenses

	2024-25 Fiscal Year Actuals	2025-26 Fiscal Year Forecast	2026-27 Fiscal Year Budget	2027-28 Fiscal Year Budget	2028-29 Fiscal Year Budget
Salaries and Wages	\$2,358,060	\$2,596,500	\$2,861,000	\$2,929,000	\$2,965,000
Employee Benefits	367,342	340,600	416,000	425,000	431,000
Transportation & Communication	175,162	250,000	250,000	250,000	250,000
Services	5,216,520	6,302,000	5,711,000	5,761,000	5,811,000
Information Technology and System Renewal Project			-	-	-
Supplies & Equipment	4,393	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000
Total Administration Costs	\$8,121,477	\$9,509,100	\$9,258,000	\$9,385,000	\$9,477,000

The following points should be noted with respect to the preceding financial information regarding NOHFC resources:

- Salaries and benefits include the risk-managed full-time equivalent (FTE) cap of 26 full-time positions and one summer student. The ministry allocation for NOHFC FTEs remains at 23.
- The Services component includes costs associated with third-party and Ministry of Northern Economic Development and Growth (MNEDG) due diligence services, Land and Resource Cluster Business Solutions Services for ICT needs, and the MNEDG Legal Services Branch assisting with legal requirements.

8.2. Projected Three-year Financial Budget

The following table includes a forecast of NOHFC revenues and expenses projected from 2026-27, through 2028-29.

(Figures are reported in 000's of dollars)

For the fiscal year	2024-25 Actual	2025-26 Forecast	2026-27 Projected	2027-28 Projected	2028-29 Projected
Revenue					
Province of Ontario Grant	\$100,000	\$110,000	\$110,000	\$110,000	\$110,000
Interest on cash and cash equivalents	3,825	2,500	2,000	2,000	2,000
Interest on loans receivable	818	708	800	900	1,000
Recoveries	2,503	769	-	-	-
Total Revenue	\$107,146	\$113,977	\$112,800	\$112,900	\$113,000
Expenses					
Grants	\$108,207	\$106,347	\$105,662	\$106,035	\$104,538
Credit losses	750	2,300	2,500	2,700	2,800
Administration – see schedule	8,121	9,509	9,258	9,385	9,477
Total Expenses	\$117,078	\$118,156	\$117,420	\$118,120	\$116,815
Annual Deficit	\$(9,932)	\$(4,179)	\$(4,620)	\$(5,220)	\$(3,815)

Assumptions used in developing the Projected Three Year Budget forecast:

- Transfer payment allocation is held as a payable by the ministry until the cash resources are needed by NOHFC to cash flow committed projects.
- NOHFC's annual allocation will remain at \$110 million through to 2028-29, per the Ontario budget.

9.0. Third-Party Engagement

Third parties are integral to NOHFC's operations and performance achievements.

NOHFC utilizes the services of third parties to support the delivery of its private sector programming by providing proposal due diligence, financial monitoring, evaluation of payment requests from clients, and collection and enforcement services for loans and conditional contributions.

NOHFC secures its third-party services through a competitive procurement process

established by the province. NOHFC last initiated a request for bids process during fiscal year 2020-21, and signed a five-year agreement, effective May 1, 2022. Planning for the procurement of the next contract began in 2025-26, and will continue in 2026-27.

10. Strategic Partnership – the Ministry of Northern Economic Development and Growth Regional Economic Development Branch (REDB)

Within the Ministry of Northern Economic Development and Growth, REDB delivers, supports, and promotes NOHFC programs across Northern Ontario through its five area teams. REDB currently has 21 office locations across Northern Ontario, with area team head offices located in Kenora, Thunder Bay, Timmins, Sault Ste. Marie, and North Bay / Sudbury. Each area team employs Northern Development Advisors who provide services to NOHFC clients, including project development, application assistance, and investigating additional or other complementary sources of funding.

For public sector clients, REDB conducts proposal due diligence, performs project monitoring services, and evaluates payment requests from clients. REDB also provides program advisory services to NOHFC's private sector clients. The enhancement and streamlining of REDB's support services from application development to project monitoring is essential in supporting these clients.

11. NOHFC - Ontario Public Service Employees

NOHFC maintains a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Ministry of Northern Economic Development and Growth (MNEDG). The MOU includes that MNEDG will arrange for the provision of services and support from MNEDG to NOHFC in consultation with the Board, Chair, and the Executive Director to ensure fulfillment of NOHFC's mandate and to support its day-to-day activities.

These support and services include MNEDG management and staff who are assigned to NOHFC. All management and staff assigned to NOHFC remain Ontario Public Service (OPS) employees and the Executive Director has a dual reporting structure to the Chair and Board of Directors of NOHFC, as well as to MNEDG. All management and staff are compensated through the OPS compensation framework and are subject to all OPS human resources directives and policies.

The NOHFC full-time (FTE) complement consists of both unionized and non-unionized employees. For the unionized FTEs, the bargaining units include the following:

Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU)

This is the largest bargaining unit in the OPS, representing a broad range of non-managerial job categories across the government. OPSEU is governed by the Crown Employees Collective Bargaining Act (CECBA) and the Labour Relations Act.

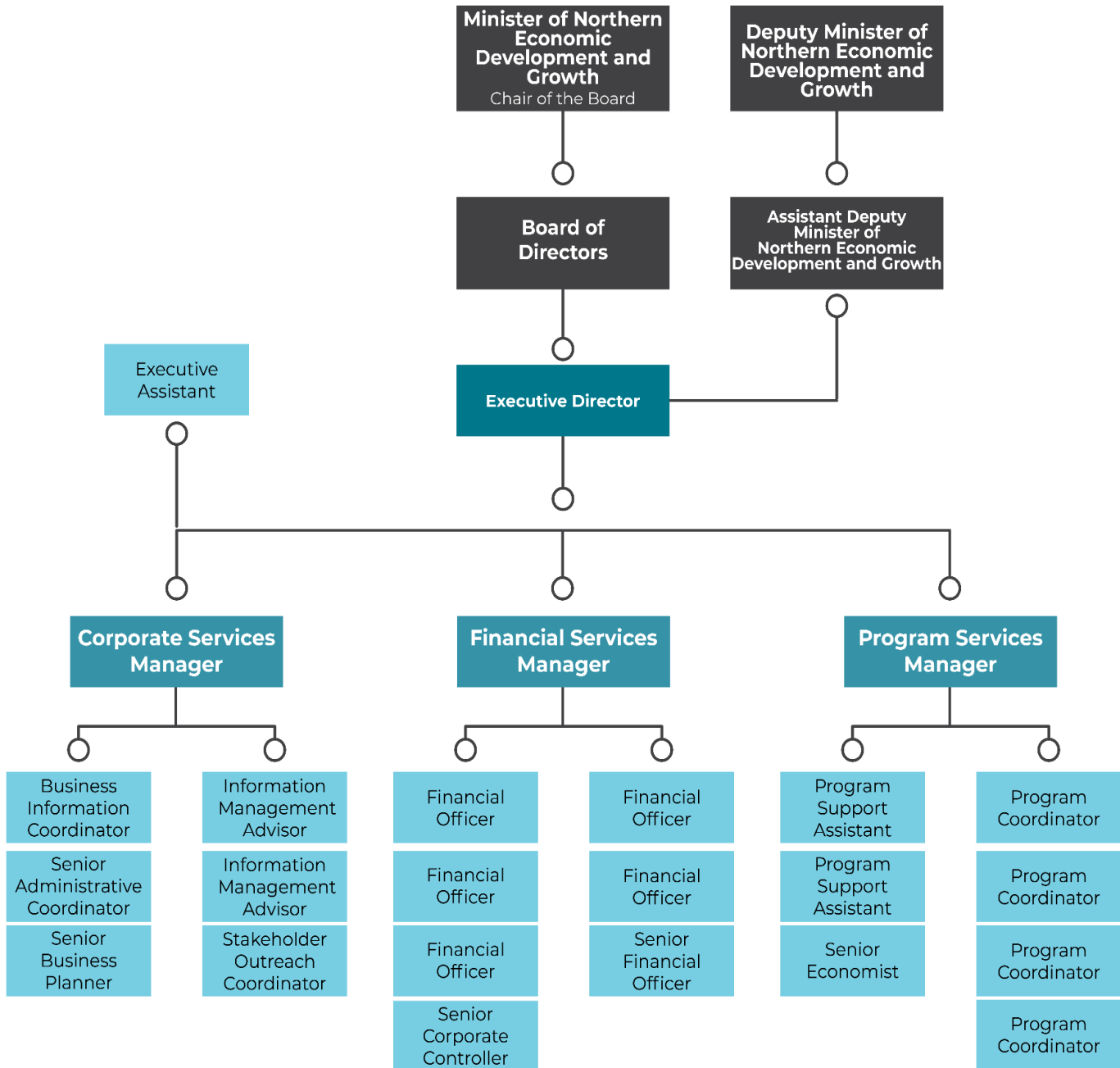
In the OPS, OPSEU is divided into two bargaining units – the Unified unit and the Correctional unit. Dispute Resolution for the Unified unit is by strike or lockout, with no disruption of essential services and Interest Arbitration for the Correctional unit.

Association of Management, Administration & Professional Crown Employees of Ontario (AMAPCEO)

AMAPCEO is the bargaining agent for professional and supervisory staff who do not exercise managerial functions or who do not deal with confidential labour relations matters.

AMAPCEO is governed by the CECBA and the Labour Relations Act. Dispute Resolution is by strike or lockout, with no disruption of essential services.

12.0. NOHFC's Organizational Structure



13.0. Risk Management

NOHFC has an Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) program that supports the agency by identifying, assessing, and managing risks related to the agency. The ERM is aligned with the OPS and MNEDG ERM program and practices, which include an assessment process, regular monitoring of key risks, and reporting of these findings to the Board and to MNEDG. NOHFC's risk management framework provides a platform for managing risk through several key risk areas, including:

- Strategy;
- Accountability / Governance;
- Operations;
- Information Technology and Infrastructure; and
- Workforce.

NOHFC's Executive Director has the ultimate accountability for risk management and is supported by NOHFC's senior management and NOHFC Board Committees, including the Audit and Governance committees, and resources from MNEDG, including Legal Services and Business Planning.