

**DEH CHO BRIDGE**

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to provide Members and the public with an update on the Deh Cho Bridge.

Construction has reached a key milestone with the launch of the truss, a key component of the bridge superstructure. The truss is the continuous steel assembly that connects each of the piers, and which will eventually carry the concrete deck panels and asphalt driving surface. Launching of the truss is the process of assembling the steel members onshore and then pushing them in a continuous line out from the shore to span the piers. Once the truss is in place, the contractor will erect the two towers, string the massive cables that will support the centre span and install the pre-fabricated deck panels. It is expected that the north-side superstructure will be completed by spring break-up. The center span and the south-side truss will be assembled and launched in the summer. I encourage everyone to visit the Deh Cho Bridge website to track the progress of the final phase of construction.

Mr. Speaker, there was a six week delay in the delivery of critical bridge components that, coupled with the timing of the ice break up, has caused the contractor to look for ways of saving time. We expect a revised schedule at the end of February, once additional information is known from the truss launch that is currently underway. The

Contractor is currently making good progress, with the truss now resting on the second permanent pier. It is expected that all the construction materials, including the steel truss, towers and concrete deck panels, will be on-site prior to spring break-up. This will facilitate a timely reengagement in the work once the river is clear of ice. We will continue to plan and work toward a November 2011 completion date.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Transportation recently released the Levelton Report. This is an audit of the work completed prior to the GNWT assuming control of the project. The report is available on the Deh Cho Bridge website. The Levelton Report presented 14 findings and recommendations. In response, the Department, in consultation with the Project Management Team, has developed a comprehensive action plan. Almost half of the items are now resolved and the remaining are underway.

The work underway includes:

- Completion of a design continuity check to ensure the input and modifications from the three official Engineers of Record for the Project is coordinated;
- Remediation of the scour rock protection at the base of the piers;
- Completion of in-situ testing and inspection of the bridge components produced by Atcon that were not subject to a consistent quality control program;
- Inspection and, if required, repair of a minor cavity that may exist on the top of Pier 3 South.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to assure everyone that all the issues that have been identified by the Levelton audit will be addressed without affecting the safety or integrity of the bridge or the progress of construction, and that we have sufficient funds in the project security account to cover the remedial work.

Mr. Speaker I also note that the Auditor General of Canada is conducting her mid-point performance audit of the Deh Cho Bridge project, which will be made available soon. The audit was requested by the Members of the Legislative Assembly. The Department of Transportation and other GNWT officials cooperated fully with the Office of the Auditor General and provided all documents and details requested to ensure access to all relevant information.

I hope we can finally concentrate on the prize at hand, the opening of the Deh Cho Bridge. This will be an inspiring structure that will be an icon for generations to come.

Mahsi Cho.