

**New Transportation Corridors**

Mr. Speaker, this summer an important step towards the Government of the Northwest Territories' commitment to secure funding for new priority transportation corridors in the Northwest Territories was achieved.

In July, the federal government announced the approval of funding to advance the all-weather Mackenzie Valley Highway under the National Trade Corridors Fund. Up to 73 percent of total eligible project costs, to a maximum of \$102.5 million, have been committed by the federal government for the construction of the Great Bear River Bridge, Wrigley to Mount Gaudet Access Road, and environmental and planning studies. Along with an investment of \$37.5 million from the Government of the Northwest Territories, the total funding leveraged towards the project is \$140 million.

The approval demonstrates the commitment of both governments to addressing the unique transportation needs in Canada's North to improve safety and foster economic and social development, while increasing our resiliency to the effects of climate change.

Work to advance the next steps for the construction of the all-weather Mackenzie Valley Highway will bring important benefits to residents throughout the Mackenzie Valley, including employment and training opportunities that build local capacity. Residents of the Sahtu have already witnessed these benefits on a smaller scale through the construction of the Canyon Creek All-Season Access Road, which is expected to officially open November 13. The local employment and skill development residents have benefited from on this project will prepare them to

take advantage of the opportunities that will come with the extension of the Mackenzie Valley Highway.

Mr. Speaker, the Great Bear River Bridge represents one of these opportunities. The bridge will eliminate the need for an ice crossing on the Mackenzie River, improving the resiliency and safety of this crossing and increasing mobility for residents of the Mackenzie Valley.

Construction of the 15 kilometre Wrigley to Mount Gaudet Access Road is a project similar in scope to the Canyon Creek All-season Access Road and will provide opportunities for employment and training for residents of the Dehcho.

Funding for environmental and planning studies will support the completion of critical project components, including consultation with Indigenous governments and communities, finalizing routing and design, and environmental and regulatory reviews, leading to obtaining permits for road construction.

Increased traffic volumes and weights supported by an all-weather Mackenzie Valley Highway will result in efficiencies in the delivery of essential goods that contribute to stabilizing the cost of living in communities. Economic development will be enabled by increased access to mineral and petroleum resources in the region and reducing costs of production and exploration for industry. In terms of social benefits, we only need look to the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk Highway to see how enhanced intercommunity mobility has increased access to health care, education, sporting events, and more.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Infrastructure is continuing to pursue other federal funding opportunities for the remaining components of the Mackenzie Valley Highway, as well as the Slave Geological Province Access Corridor. The Government of the Northwest Territories will reapply for funding for the Slave Geological Province Access Corridor following a Northern-specific call for proposals to be issued under the National Trade Corridors Fund by the end of 2018. Funding for environmental and planning studies as well as replacement of the Frank Channel Bridge to eliminate a key bottleneck along this route will help advance next priority phases.

Mr. Speaker, on Thursday of last week, the decision by the Responsible Ministers on the future of the proposed Tłı̨chǫ All-Season Road was issued. After careful consideration of all of the information and views provided by parties during the environmental assessment process, the Responsible Ministers have approved the project and agreed to adopt the recommendations of the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board with modifications. The Tłı̨chǫ Government separately concurred with the decision of the Responsible Ministers.

As a result of this positive decision, the Government of the Northwest Territories will work to identify a successful proponent through the competitive procurement process by November of this year and proceed to the regulatory and permitting phase for this project. This will allow for construction to begin as early as next fall. Tłı̨chǫ residents and businesses will be involved throughout the construction and operation of the highway, which will help lower the cost of living in this region, increase the resiliency of these communities to the impacts of climate change, and open up new economic opportunities in the region.

Partnerships with Indigenous organizations will also be critical to ensuring the success of the projects already mentioned. The Department of Infrastructure is meeting with Indigenous organizations, community representatives, and staff from the relevant review boards over the fall and early winter to discuss next steps in

advancing environmental reviews and permitting for the Mackenzie Valley Highway, partnerships with Indigenous governments, and how benefits to local residents can be maximized. Departmental staff met recently with the Board of the Sahtu Secretariat Incorporated and Chief and Council of the Pehdzeh Ki First Nation, and both of these organizations have indicated their continuing support for moving forward together with us in partnership on this project. The Department is also continuing work to identify opportunities and best options to partner with Indigenous groups on the Slave Geological Province Access Corridor.

Mr. Speaker, it is an exciting time for our territory as these projects begin to take shape. Ensuring the people of the Northwest Territories are able to make the most of these investments is critical before any construction takes place and we look forward to working closely with our partners to building a safe, efficient, and resilient infrastructure system that meets the needs of the North.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.