

### **Strategic Infrastructure Corridor Projects**

Mr. Speaker, early in the life of the 18<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly, our government made a commitment to secure funding for the advancement of new strategic infrastructure corridors. It is a commitment we made in Connecting Us, the Northwest Territories 25-year Transportation Strategy, as well as in our government's mandate.

The three priority transportation corridor projects our government is pursuing are the Tłı̄chǝ All-Season Road, the Mackenzie Valley Highway, and the Slave Geological Access Corridor. Each of these projects will help connect communities, support employment and training opportunities, increase our resiliency to climate change, and create new social and economic opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, today, I am pleased to provide an update on these projects.

Less than two years ago our government opened the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk Highway. Now, we are getting ready for the construction of another new highway: the Tłı̄chǝ All-Season Road. When it opens, this highway will cover a distance of 97 kilometres and provide year-round access from Highway No.3 to Whatì. The Environmental Review and Regulatory Processes are nearing completion, with construction on track to begin this fall.

Construction and maintenance of the road will result in significant employment and training opportunities for Tłıchǫ residents, which supports the development of a strong northern workforce. In fact, specific requirements have been established for hiring and training local residents. In the long-term, the road is expected to reduce the cost of living for the region and support new social opportunities, while helping to attract additional interest from industry in the exploration and development of natural resources.

Mr. Speaker, we are working closely with the Tłıchǫ government on this project and thank them for their support. The Tłıchǫ Government is an equity partner in North Star Infrastructure, with whom the GNWT has a Public-Private Partnership, or P3, Project Agreement to design, build, finance, operate and maintain the road. As we've seen with the Stanton Renewal and the Mackenzie Valley Fibre Link, P3s are an effective way of delivering large, strategic infrastructure projects that are essential for the NWT. They allow our government to bring in private-sector expertise and accountability to the process, while preserving government ownership of core public assets.

Mr. Speaker, work has also continued on the advancement of the Mackenzie Valley Highway, focusing on the section of highway from Wrigley to Norman Wells.

Last year, the federal government announced \$102.5 million to advance the highway under the National Trade Corridors Fund. The Government of the Northwest Territories has committed \$37.5 million to the project, bringing the total investment to \$140 million.

Mr. Speaker, continuing to extend the Mackenzie Valley Highway will connect more communities to the all-weather road system, while increasing resiliency of the winter road system to the impacts of climate change. The project is currently the subject of an ongoing Environmental Assessment, and work has started on the preparation and submission of the Developer's Assessment Report. The Department of Infrastructure has started holding community engagement sessions in Norman Wells, Tulita, Wrigley and Fort Simpson regarding the overall project. Additional community and stakeholder meetings will take place in the coming months in the Sahtu and Dehcho regions.

Most recently, the GNWT and Sahtu Secretariat Incorporated signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the advancement of the Mackenzie Valley Highway. The MOU outlines how we will co-operate through the environmental review and regulatory processes. Our government is also working with the Pehdzeh Ki First Nation on the advancement of the Mackenzie Valley Highway through the Environmental Review and Regulatory Processes.

Mr. Speaker, we also continue to make progress on the Slave Geological Province Corridor.

Yesterday, the Government of Canada announced that it will provide \$30 million to support the advancement of the Slave Geological Province under the National Trade Corridors Fund. The GNWT has committed \$10 million to the project, bringing the total investment to \$40 million. Funding will support planning and environmental studies that will lead to obtaining permits for road construction.

The Slave Geological Province Corridor will serve as an important transportation, hydro, and communications corridor, improving access to significant untapped mineral potential, helping us green the mining industry, and facilitating future resource exploration and development opportunities. This project is not possible without support from Indigenous stakeholders. I have discussed the project with the Yellowknives Dene, Akaitcho Territory Government, Tłıchǫ Government, and North Slave Metis Alliance. Further discussions with Indigenous governments will continue over the coming months to explore future opportunities for involvement in the project.

Mr. Speaker, our government also continues to work with the Kitikmeot Inuit Association on its proposed Grays Bay Road and Port project, to further our long-term vision of an infrastructure corridor through the SGP that will connect to an all-season road in western Nunavut that links to a deep water port on the Arctic Ocean. As we work through the Environmental Assessment, Regulatory Processes and pursuit of funding for these projects, we will continue to engage Indigenous groups and work with them to take advantage of the benefits that the projects will bring. We will also work closely with our counterparts in the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to ensure the ongoing protection of wildlife and natural environment.

Mr. Speaker, strong and effective partnerships with the federal government and Indigenous governments are essential to the success of these projects. Together, we can improve transportation connectivity across the territory, which will help us achieve our social and economic goals and improve the quality of life in the North.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.