

THE HONOURABLE DIANE ARCHIE
MINISTER OF INFRASTRUCTURE

Frank Channel Bridge Replacement

Mr. Speaker, I have a Return to Written Question asked by the Member for Monfwi on February 14, 2023, regarding Frank Channel Bridge Replacement.

1. Can the Minister provide a detailed breakdown of the additional costs identified for the Frank Channel Bridge Replacement Project?

Mr. Speaker, since the original 2021 application to the National Trade Corridors Fund, project costs for the Dehk'è Frank Channel Bridge have increased due to a variety of external factors. This experience is not unique to this project or to the Northwest Territories. All jurisdictions in Canada are experiencing inflated commodity costs, supply chain shortages and increased labour costs, which are impacting infrastructure projects.

Regarding the Dehk'è Frank Channel Bridge, the Department of Infrastructure received an initial cost estimate from the Tłıchq-Kiewit General Partnership and also solicited an independent, third-party cost estimate. Both estimates indicated the previously announced \$50 million dollar contribution agreement was not enough to deliver the project.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Northwest Territories has requested a top-up to the funding agreement with Canada that, if approved, would increase the total contribution agreement to \$70 million dollars. The project will be advancing to procurement stage and therefore the detail breakdown cannot be shared.

2. Can the Minister provide a detailed breakdown of funding already committed or budgeted by the GNWT, and or committed/budgeted by the Federal Government?

In 2021, the Government of Northwest Territories and Infrastructure Canada announced \$50 million dollars in funding for the replacement of the Dehk'è Frank Channel Bridge under the National Trade Corridors Fund. This would be cost shared, with Canada contributing 75% and our government contributing 25%.

It is important to note that total project costs include more than construction costs. Other costs relate to engineering work, design, consultants, project management, environmental permitting and monitoring, and contingency funding.

3. Can the Minister provide a copy of the last structural assessment completed on the Frank Channel Bridge?

Later today, at the appropriate time, I will table two documents to answer the Member's question: the 2021 Frank Channel Bridge Inspection Report and Inspection Form.

The Inspection Report finds that no major repairs are immediately recommended for the bridge. It did recommend that the potholes in the deck be repaired. These potholes were subsequently repaired by the Department.

The report also recommends that repairs be done to the existing bridge if the new bridge is not constructed within five years, including: rehabilitating the deck; a routing inspection; repainting several bridge elements; replacing the bearings on Pier 2; and, repairing concrete on several bridge elements.

4. Can the Minister provide a detailed contingency plan for continued operation and maintenance of the Frank Channel Bridge if construction of the replacement is delayed?

Department of Infrastructure staff inspect the bridge on a regular basis. Minor and preventive

maintenance of the existing bridge will continue, as required. The structure also undergoes an intensive inspection every three years. The last intensive inspection was performed in July 2021.

Appreciating the Member for Monfwi's concerns about community safety, we welcome her to attend an upcoming inspection of the bridge. My office will reach out to her, as well as to community leadership, about accompanying departmental staff and myself on a routine bridge inspection this upcoming summer.

If future inspections determine additional interventions are required to prolong the lifespan of the current structure until the new Dehk'è Frank Channel Bridge is built, mitigations could include reducing the bridge to single lane with alternating traffic, reducing the maximum weight of vehicles crossing the bridge, or a combination of both.

Please note that the current bridge crossing speed is already reduced to 40 kilometres per hour, which was the first step to reduce impact and prolong the lifespan of this critical piece of infrastructure.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.