

Transportation Update

Mr. Speaker, today I want to focus on the Government of the Northwest Territories' accomplishments in road, air and marine transportation during the 19th Legislative Assembly.

Enhancing our all-season highway system has been a top priority. In November 2021, the GNWT opened the Tłıchǵ Highway to traffic for the first time, adding to the territory's roster of all season highways. This 97-kilometre all-season road was advanced in partnership with the Tłıchǵ Government and will reduce the cost of living in the region.

The GNWT is also nearing completion of Phase One of the Prohibition Creek Access Road just south of Norman Wells. This 6.7-kilometre all-season road along the existing Mackenzie Valley Winter Road alignment is expected to be substantially complete in the fall of 2023. Not only is the construction of this all-season road making our transportation system more resilient to climate change and providing access to recreational opportunities, it is also providing employment and training opportunities for Sahtu residents in advance of the proposed Mackenzie Valley Highway project.

Advancing the Mackenzie Valley Highway and Slave Geological Province Corridor are two projects that are at the forefront of our mandate commitment to make strategic infrastructure investments. We have established partnerships with Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations and have undertaken significant work to prepare the Developer's Assessment Report required for the Mackenzie Valley Highway environmental assessment. We continue to be on track for submission of that report during the life of this government. As for the Slave Geological Province Corridor, we have also established relationships with Indigenous governments and undertaken work required to inform future

regulatory applications of the proposed Lockhart All-Season Road, the first segment of this corridor.

Along with building new roads, the GNWT continually invests in existing highway infrastructure. This fiscal year, we have invested \$62.8 million dollars in highway, bridge and culvert planning, design and construction on more than 195 kilometres of highways, bridges, culverts and access roads.

Mr. Speaker, the GNWT is responsible for operating and maintaining 27 public airports in the territory, especially vital in our communities without year-round road access. In this fiscal year alone, we are investing \$40 million dollars in airport improvement projects, including civil improvements to the Mike Zubko Airport in Inuvik. At our busiest and largest airport, we continue to advance Yellowknife's 20-year Master Plan, which will guide the airport's growth and development. In 2022, we also selected a new board for the revitalized Yellowknife Airport Economic Advisory Committee which provides strategic advice on issues and future business decisions to the airport's management, GNWT senior management and the Minister of Infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, waterways like the Mackenzie River and Great Slave Lake have long been essential transportation routes to move people and essential goods to northern communities. Marine Transportation Services and Fuel Services Division staff did a tremendous amount of planning this year to give us the best chance for a successful sailing season. Even with the best laid plans, significant challenges arose this season, including two evacuations of staff and contractors from Hay River and low water levels on the Mackenzie River. These low water levels have caused us to adjust our sailing schedules, regrettably cancel the third and final resupply trip to Norman Wells and Tulita, and pivot to a hybrid model to move cargo and fuel to the communities Marine Transportation Services serves. Staff have been quick to problem solve in support of essential resupply to northern communities.

Speaking of marine accomplishments made by this government, I am happy to say work on the Hay River Harbour Restoration Project is ongoing. To create an emergency navigational channel for vessels, the GNWT is removing approximately 84,000 cubic metres of sediment from the Hay River Harbour. Work is expected to be complete on October 07.

As evidenced in the recent evacuations and re-entries of NWT communities, the importance of access and transport by air, road and water is paramount. The GNWT continues to invest in our road, air and marine transportation infrastructure to improve the quality of life and lower the cost of living for residents and to support the expansion and diversification of the economy. But our success hinges on the hard work of staff across the territory, including those involved in the safe evacuation and return of residents this month. Their efforts are greatly appreciated.

Quyananni, Mr. Speaker.