

**Update On New Transportation Corridors**

Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories has been working hard to fulfill its mandate commitment to secure funding to advance planning and construction of priority transportation corridors in the Northwest Territories. This includes upgrading the winter road portions of the Mackenzie Valley Winter Road to an all-weather highway, and planning for the Slave Geological Province Corridor. Today, I am pleased to provide an update on the status of these strategic infrastructure projects.

In November 2018, the Honourable Francois-Philippe Champagne, Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, and Member of Parliament for the Northwest Territories, Michael McLeod, joined me and other special guests in Norman Wells to celebrate the official opening of the Canyon Creek All-Season Access Road. This road will become a segment of the Mackenzie Valley Highway and is another incremental improvement in this corridor.

This Project provided meaningful training and educational experience for local residents. At the peak of construction activity in March 2018, 81 people were employed, of which 36 were local Sahtu residents and 28 were northerners from other parts of the territory.

The Canyon Creek All-Season Access Road is a great example of a capacity-building exercise that will prepare residents to take advantage of the opportunities that will come as we continue construction on the Mackenzie Valley Highway.

Mr. Speaker, partnerships with Indigenous organizations are critical to the success of our strategic corridor projects, including the Mackenzie Valley Highway. The Department of Infrastructure commenced its engagement efforts this past month by holding initial community engagement sessions and meetings with community leadership in Norman Wells, Tulita, Wrigley and Fort Simpson. Discussions focused on the way forward for environmental reviews and permitting of this project, and how to maximize benefits to the people of the region. Many supportive comments were received, with leaders and residents interested in understanding when construction could begin, and what types of training, employment and business opportunities would be available.

Mr. Speaker, our government reached another landmark last week to advance the Slave Geological Province Infrastructure Corridor that includes transportation, communications and energy transmission. While at the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada Conference in Toronto last week, I joined Parliamentary Secretary Paul Lefebvre to announce funding to support this project. The funding will go towards the planning of the Corridor, including the investigation of potential sources, and planning and environmental studies to help advance this project, as well as contribute to aerial geophysical surveys of the region. A total of \$6.8 million will be invested, with the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, also known as CanNor, providing \$5.1 million of the funding, a further \$750,000 will come from academic institutions and the remaining amount will come from the GNWT.

The Department of Infrastructure is currently finalizing a comprehensive project application for funding to advance the Slave Geological Province Corridor under the northern call of the National Trade Corridors Fund. If approved, funding will go towards environmental planning and engineering studies for the Corridor, and completing the environmental assessment and regulatory processes for the first segment to Lockhart Lake. As we await funding announcements, the Department will continue to pursue opportunities to partner with Indigenous groups on this transformative infrastructure project.

Mr. Speaker, an important component of the Slave Geological Province Corridor that the Department is also advancing the replacement of the Frank Channel Bridge on Highway No. 3. Building a new bridge across the Frank Channel would eliminate a major bottleneck in the resupply system from southern Canada to Yellowknife and the diamond mines.

When the bridge was constructed in 1960, it was designed for trucks weighing up to 32,000 kilograms. Structural improvements have been made to the bridge over the years to allow for commercial truck loads of 63,000 kilograms. However, the existing structuring is nearing the end of its service life, and the through-truss design limits the size of loads.

The Department of Infrastructure is engaging with the community of Behchoko and the Tłı̨chǫ Government on the required relocation of the bridge, and is continuing to assemble the required pre-engineering and environmental baseline work to prepare for its replacement. The Department is also finalizing a comprehensive project application to replace the Frank Channel Bridge under the northern call of the National Trade Corridors Fund.

Mr. Speaker, transportation corridor infrastructure plays a very important part in the health of our communities and the prosperity of the NWT. Not just because of the connections it will make, but also because of the skills, training and economic opportunities that construction projects bring to the communities and residents. We look forward to continuing to work closely with our partners, including the federal government, and to building a safe, efficient, and resilient infrastructure system that meets the needs of the North.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.