

**New Transportation Corridors**

Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories made a commitment in its mandate to capture opportunities by securing funding for three new transportation corridors.

Investing in the Tlicho All-season Road, Slave Geological Province Access Corridor, and Mackenzie Valley Highway will support sustainable communities while strengthening our economy. Each project will create significant job and training opportunities, helping develop our northern workforce. As more communities are connected to the highway system, essential goods and materials can be delivered more efficiently and the cost of living will be reduced for these residents. These corridors will also support northern industry and business by providing a gateway for increased trade and development.

The Department of Infrastructure is working with the federal government to identify new opportunities to fund these critical projects under the 2017 Federal Budget. Our message to Canada is that the time to invest in these projects is now in order to maximize the benefits to northerners and all Canadians.

Earlier this year, we received positive news with regards to the Tlicho All-season Road when the federal government announced conditional funding for project construction under the P3 Canada Fund. The road will replace the southern section of the existing winter road, providing uninterrupted access to Whati and increasing the window of access to Gameti and Wekweeti. This is particularly important as warmer winters caused by climate change have increased challenges for building

and operating winter roads in the region in recent years. Resulting reductions in the cost of freight will improve the standard of life in these communities by making it more affordable to deliver a diverse range of essential goods, from food and fuel to building materials for houses and construction projects. Lower operating costs for local businesses will allow them to be more competitive in territorial markets. All-weather access will also help attract tourism opportunities and further interest from industry in exploration and development of natural resources in the region.

The Government of the Northwest Territories continues to work closely with the Tlicho Government and the Community of Whati as the project proceeds through the environmental assessment process. Project construction will maximize opportunities for Tlicho residents as well as northerners from other parts of the territory, providing employment and training for our people. A Request for Qualifications was released in March and closes June 9th.

Now that there is significant movement on the Tlicho All-season Road, the Department of Infrastructure is focusing on securing funding for the Slave Geological Province Access Road and Mackenzie Valley Highway.

The Slave Geological Province Access Corridor is a transformative project for our territory, enabling industry to better develop the high mineral potential of the Slave Geological Province. The current lack of access into the region is resulting in additional costs for industry that impact the competitiveness of our territory and the ability of projects in the area to attract investment. The long-term vision for this project includes construction of an all-weather road in the NWT that would connect to an all-weather road and port in Nunavut. This would result in the creation of an important economic development corridor and a gateway for northern trade and

supply that could involve opportunities to collaborate with the Government of Nunavut, industry, and Aboriginal governments.

With the challenges being faced by our mineral development industry right now, the timing for this project has never been more critical. Climate change is limiting existing winter road access to the diamond mines, resulting in additional costs to industry resupply efforts and other operational difficulties. This is due to a combination of warmer temperatures, more unpredictable weather, and the increased traffic projected to resupply the region's mining industry. An all-weather road to the Slave Geological Province will stabilize the resupply system to existing mines while enabling new mineral exploration and development opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Infrastructure has conducted numerous studies on this corridor over the last two decades. Based on the results of mineral potential and route option studies, a corridor has been identified that will provide the greatest economic benefit to the region and the NWT, while minimizing impact on the environment. The Departments of Infrastructure, Finance and Industry, Tourism and Investment are jointly conducting a P3 business case assessment of the chosen corridor. This business case will allow the GNWT to make a better estimate of construction costs for this road, as well as determine an appropriate funding model.

The Department of Infrastructure continues to focus on advancing next steps, including undertaking environmental studies and finalizing engineering and design work for the first phase of the project from Tibbitt to Lockhart Lake. The Department of Infrastructure is also working with caribou subject experts from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources to identify ways to mitigate impacts to caribou and protect this important resource while the project advances.

The Mackenzie Valley Highway will connect several of our remote communities to the public highway system. The project provides an opportunity to reduce the cost of living by replacing the Mackenzie Valley Winter Road with an all-weather highway that is more resilient to the impacts of climate change and allows for more efficient delivery of goods to communities. Improved mobility will allow residents better access to services that may not be immediately available in their own community. Businesses will be connected to other markets, supporting economic growth.

Mr. Speaker, more than ever, we need to invest in projects that generate employment and reduce the cost of living in the Sahtu region. The Mackenzie Valley Highway is critical to unlocking much of the still untapped resource potential of the region. Improved access will reduce costs for industry exploration and development, opening up new areas of mineral potential and increasing the attractiveness of continued petroleum production and development in the Sahtu.

An important incremental step in converting the existing winter road to an all-weather road is underway with the Canyon Creek All-season Road Project, a 14 kilometre access road south of the Town of Norman Wells. The contractor started work clearing the right-of-way in March and construction will continue over the summer. The project, which is expected to be completed by fall 2018, will provide employment opportunities in the region and result in access to granular resources and traditional Sahtu lands, which may be used for recreation, tourism, and business development.

The Department of Infrastructure continues to lobby the federal government for funding towards the Mackenzie Valley Highway and to pursue further engineering and environmental studies. Engineering work is also underway for the Great Bear

River Bridge, which represents a critical project component and would extend winter road access into the Sahtu.

All three of these new corridor projects are at various stages in their development. But while the Department of Infrastructure is working hard to bring each closer to construction, we are nearing completion of another very important project. The Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk Highway will open to traffic November 15, 2017, becoming the first public highway to the Arctic Ocean and achieving a Canadian vision of connecting our country by road from coast to coast to coast.

The last winter construction season on the project consisted of completing the final two bridges, crushing, and stockpiling of surface gravel. Construction this summer season will focus on grading, packing, and shaping the base of the highway in preparation for gravel surfacing. Signage and guardrails will be installed this fall.

I believe we will soon be entering a new era of improved access for our territory by expanding the highway system to the remote regions of our territory. Through these projects we can help strengthen our territory and develop it as a land of new opportunities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.