

Inuvik Tuktoyaktuk Highway No. 10

Mr. Speaker, the infrastructure that supports transportation has always been crucial to Northerners, to enable us to grow and develop our economy, and to help create opportunities for our residents to find success. Transportation infrastructure has always been at the forefront of enabling Northerners to grow and develop our economy, and never has it been more important in guaranteeing our future growth and prosperity than today.

The opening of the all-weather highway between the Town of Inuvik and the Hamlet of Tuktoyaktuk on November 15, 2017 is an example of what collaboration between all levels of government can do to have our voices heard in Ottawa.

Expanding our transportation system with the opening of the Inuvik Tuktoyaktuk Highway No. 10 helps us connect residents to new social and employment opportunities, stabilize the cost of living in the territory, increase our resiliency and adapt to the impacts of climate change, and provide better access to natural resources.

The role our partners play in helping to shape the Northwest Territories today and into the future cannot be overstated. The Inuvik Tuktoyaktuk Highway No. 10 reflects the dedication of many people who have worked to improve the lives of our residents, and contribute to building a strong and prosperous Northwest Territories for generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, Canada's first highway to the Arctic Ocean is bringing significant benefits to the people of the Beaufort Delta Region, and global attention to the Northwest Territories.

The official opening was a success and included the attendance and participation of, The Governor General of Canada, Her Excellency the Right Honourable Julie Payette, The Federal Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Mr. Amarjeet Sohi, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, Ms. Caroline Bennett; and The Member of Parliament for the Northwest Territories, Mr. Michael McLeod.

Our Premier, a number of Ministers and Members of the Legislative Assembly, and other territorial, Indigenous government and community representatives also attended.

Mr. Speaker, this new highway is connecting residents and communities with each other, as well as to new opportunities. In its first few months of operation, we are seeing traffic volumes in line with what we had expected.

The Inuvik Tuktoyaktuk Highway No. 10 is providing more opportunities for family and friends to connect and share experiences together. The Highway has also been instrumental in the creation of new relationships, and participation prospects such as youth and adult sporting tournaments, hockey, badminton and volleyball to name a few. It allows families to take advantage of activities at the swimming complex and other facilities all of which contribute to healthy lifestyles.

The Inuvik Tuktoyaktuk Highway No. 10 provides opportunities for increased consumer choice by providing improved road access to other communities. Increased choice in goods and services should translate into an improved cost of living, better access to health care and other important benefits.

Mr. Speaker, investments in northern transportation infrastructure help to diversify economic and social opportunities for people of the North. Working with Industry, Tourism and Investment, the Department of Infrastructure is committed to helping businesses in the Beaufort Delta Region capitalize on the economic opportunities created by this project.

In recent months, the number one tourism inquiry from potential visitors to the Northwest Territories relates to travelling the Inuvik Tuktoyaktuk Highway No. 10. The Film Commission has seen an increase in requests to film along this unique northern highway, connecting Canada from coast to coast to coast. The potential economic impact will be positive for the people in the Beaufort Delta, with film crews using local services and hiring local skilled crew members.

The Beaufort Delta is rich in oil and gas reserves, and the new highway will provide more cost feasible opportunities for potential development in the region. The Inuvialuit Regional Corporation is currently studying the feasibility of natural gas development in the region, and should natural gas extraction be viable, the development of this resource could provide clean energy security, employment opportunities, and support a sustainable economic future in the Beaufort Delta Region.

Mr. Speaker, there are also important scientific contributions relating to the Inuvik Tuktoyaktuk Highway No. 10. The Northwest Territories is a leader nationally and internationally in the area of permafrost study, and in contributing to the discovery of knowledge focusing on climate change.

The Inuvik Tuktoyaktuk Highway No. 10 will increase our resiliency in adapting to the impacts of climate change and provide better access to natural resources. The continued expansion of our transportation system will help us to connect residents to new employment, social and cultural opportunities, and help stabilize the cost of living for all those who live and work in the Northwest Territories. Nation-building infrastructure projects can happen today in Canada's North, much as they did in previous generations. The partnerships that we continue to build on will help the Northwest Territories move forward to become a far greater part of the Canadian economy, and give our residents the opportunity to achieve economic self-determination.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.