

Federal Funding for Infrastructure

Mr. Speaker, infrastructure investments help connect residents to essential services, lower the cost of living, increase our resiliency to the impacts of climate change, and support economic development. Today, I want to provide Members an update on priority infrastructure projects being pursued by the Government of the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Speaker, in 2017, the Government of Canada announced its Investing in Canada Plan, which includes over \$180 billion in infrastructure investments over 12 years. The Government of the Northwest Territories continues to work with our federal counterparts to receive more information on new federal funding program and to identify opportunities that will benefit our territory.

On July 6, the Government of the Northwest Territories received a letter from the federal Minister of Infrastructure outlining our territory's allocation under four funding streams being administered by Infrastructure Canada. These streams include investments in Green Infrastructure that supports the territory's commitments to the environment, including those under the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change; Public Transit infrastructure; Community, Culture and Recreation infrastructure; and a Rural and Northern Communities infrastructure stream that supports wide-ranging infrastructure priorities such as local roads, food security, and broadband connectivity.

Also included under the Rural and Northern Communities stream is an Arctic Energy Fund for projects supporting more efficient and reliable energy in Canada's North. This fund will provide \$175 million to the Northwest Territories, which will be used to implement actions identified under the Government of the Northwest Territories' new Energy Strategy to be finalized in the New Year.

In this letter, the federal minister indicated that the Government of Canada would be initiating negotiations on bilateral agreements for this funding with the goal of concluding negotiations by March 2018 at the latest. The Government of the NWT has already begun working to draft an initial list of infrastructure projects that could benefit from this funding and match these projects to the different federal funding streams. Infrastructure priorities will include those already identified under the Mandate of this 18th Legislative Assembly. The Government of the Northwest Territories will have to be strategic to maximize opportunities, and we look forward to working with Regular Members as we work for the benefit of all Northerners.

In addition to the programs announced by Infrastructure Canada, there are a series of other national programs that have been announced by the federal government, including those that address social infrastructure such as housing, education, and long-term care. The Government of the Northwest Territories is awaiting further details. While, we are making progress to advance priorities, like the National Trade Corridors Fund and Low Carbon Economy Fund.

Mr. Speaker, small jurisdictions like the NWT are still playing catch-up and require basic highway infrastructure to connect our communities and provide opportunities for economic growth. That is why our government made a commitment in its mandate to capture opportunities for investment in transportation infrastructure by working to secure funding for the Mackenzie Valley Highway, make an all-weather road to Whati and improve access to the Slave Geological Province. These projects

were identified as top priorities for NWT residents during engagement sessions for the Government of the Northwest Territories' 25-year Transportation Strategy, released in 2016, which included an online survey, stakeholder interviews, and public meetings in all regional centres. These investments will connect residents to new social and employment opportunities, reduce 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.

Consistent with this commitment, the Department of Infrastructure has submitted two Expressions of Interest to Transport Canada under the National Trade Corridors Fund for the Slave Geological Province Access Corridor and Mackenzie Valley Highway projects.

Projects under the National Trade Corridors Fund are intended to support the flow of goods and passengers and increase economic development. The program is merit-based, with up to \$400 million of this funding being dedicated to transportation projects in the three territories.

The Expressions of Interests phase represents a first step in a longer project approval process.

Project proposals sent to Transport Canada under the National Trade Corridors Fund will also be shared with the Canada Infrastructure Bank, which allows for an opportunity to fund these projects under the Bank instead. The Infrastructure Bank will focus on large, transformative, revenue generating projects, which could potentially include the Slave Geological Province Access Corridor and Taltson Hydro Expansion Project. It is expected that the Infrastructure Bank will be operational by the end of 2017.

Mr. Speaker, we are currently very early in the process for developing these projects. Federal funding will allow the Government of the Northwest Territories to advance to next steps, which include additional planning and engineering work, environmental activities supporting the protection of wildlife such as caribou, and engagements with stakeholders, including Aboriginal governments and organizations.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories has also submitted an initial proposal for funding under the Low Carbon Economy Fund towards a number of programs that would help reduce fossil fuel use and greenhouse gas emissions in different sectors of the Northwest Territories' economy. Government of the Northwest Territories staff met with officials from Environment and Climate Change Canada in August to discuss this draft proposal and we anticipate submitting a formal proposal by mid-October. Funding received under this Fund would support the implementation of the Government of the Northwest Territories' commitments under the Pan-Canadian Framework on Climate Change and Clean Growth.

Significant and meaningful investment in NWT infrastructure is needed. Creating the North our people want and need means working together with many partners: Canada, Indigenous governments, community governments, the Legislative Assembly, business and industry, to create and implement a clear plan for investing in our people in the long term.

On September 21, I met with other federal, provincial, and territorial ministers in Ottawa to discuss early results and the next phase of the Investing in Canada Plan. This meeting provided a significant opportunity for jurisdictions to share their infrastructure priorities and discuss how federal funding programs can help maximize the benefits of these projects.

We will continue to keep Members apprised of the progress of submissions under the National Trade Corridors Fund and Low Carbon Economy Fund and any other federal programs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.