

Federal Infrastructure Funding

Mr. Speaker, investments in effective and resilient infrastructure provide the foundation for a stronger North. Through infrastructure improvements, we can better connect communities to the services they rely on, while mitigating the cost of living and doing business. Replacing or upgrading our assets increases our resiliency to the impacts of climate change and as we expand our infrastructure, we will support important economic development that provides residents with well-paying jobs and training opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of the Northwest Territories has often worked in partnership with the federal government to deliver meaningful investments that have a transformative impact on our territory. I am pleased to say that earlier today we had the opportunity to announce another milestone in this partnership with the signing of an Integrated Bilateral Agreement for federal infrastructure funds under the Investing in Canada Plan.

Mr. Speaker, all funding under the Agreement is being cost shared 75 percent federal and 25 percent territorial funding. The federal government's contribution will provide over \$570 million to the Government of the Northwest Territories under various funding streams of the Investing in Canada Plan over the next 10 years. The Northwest Territories' contribution will come from a variety of sources and is approximately \$190 million, meaning nearly \$760 million in infrastructure funding in the North will be leveraged through the Agreement. The streams included in the Agreement are the Green Infrastructure Fund; Public Transit Fund; Community, Culture and Recreation Fund; and Rural and Northern Communities Fund, which includes the Arctic Energy Fund.

Projects benefitting from this funding will help support the mandate and priorities of this Legislative Assembly. Upgrades to community infrastructure will improve quality of life for residents and increase local capacity. Transportation projects, such as ongoing highway rehabilitation, will provide for safer and more efficient intercommunity mobility. Funding for energy projects will support the implementation of the 2030 Energy Strategy and Action Plan, and help us meet greenhouse gas reduction targets and stabilize the cost of living. Projects that support food security will increase the long-term sustainability of our communities. Expanded broadband connections will modernize our society and help address our ongoing communication technology requirements.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Infrastructure expects to be prepared to submit applications for a few projects that could begin in early 2018-2019 to Infrastructure Canada.

Mr. Speaker, the signing of the Integrated Bilateral Agreement with Infrastructure Canada is good news. Going forward, further opportunities exist to leverage infrastructure funding for the Northwest Territories under various application-based programs under the Investing in Canada Plan.

In November, the Government of the Northwest Territories submitted comprehensive project proposals for the Slave Geological Province Access Corridor and Mackenzie Valley Highway to Transport Canada for funding consideration under the National Trade Corridors Fund. Up to \$400 million in funding is being dedicated to transportation projects in the three territories under this program. The GNWT's proposals identify funding for all project phases, with a focus on next priority phases, to help advance these corridors as committed to under our 25-year Transportation Strategy and the Government of the Northwest Territories mandate. It is anticipated that decisions around this first round of proposals will be made in April.

Mr. Speaker, 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. At this time, we are still awaiting additional details about when the Infrastructure Bank will become operational.

Mr. Speaker, there is also an opportunity to invest in NWT marine facilities under the Oceans Protection Plan. Transport Canada has announced its intention to invest \$94.3 million over five years in Safety Equipment and Basic Marine Infrastructure in at least 30 northern communities in the NWT and Nunavut. This funding could be used to support the operations of Marine Transportation Services and upgrade marine landing sites in communities, enhancing the delivery of essential materials to residents and businesses. Expanding marine infrastructure along the Mackenzie River and Arctic Coast would provide new opportunities for shipping throughout this important marine corridor, and support industry operations contributing to important economic growth.

Mr. Speaker, the strength of our partnership with the federal government is once again allowing us to advance our infrastructure priorities. The strategic investment announced today will result in long-term benefits to residents that result in stronger, more sustainable communities and a vibrant and prosperous Northern economy. As usual, I will continue to keep Members apprised of the success of our infrastructure funding submissions going forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.