

Summer Highway Construction

Mr. Speaker, our government is following through on its commitment to invest in transportation infrastructure by strengthening connections with our federal partners.

Improving our existing highway system helps to keep communities connected while improving safety for all road users. This also provides jobs and fosters skills and capacity development for all northerners. Today, I am pleased to provide an update on the many highway improvements that were undertaken this year.

Mr. Speaker, we have improved more than 200 kilometres of highway this summer, including three community access roads and three bridges, at a cost of \$46.4 million. This work was funded by the Government of the Northwest Territories and the federal government under the Government of Canada's New Building Canada Plan.

On Highway No. 1, work got underway to improve the embankment and drainage from kilometres 207 to 222. Pit development, material production, and culvert installations were undertaken and work has progressed to the point where improvements to this section can be completed next year. Improvements along Highway No. 1 also included a complete resurfacing of the Fort Simpson and Kakisa access roads.

Rehabilitation completed from kilometres 256 to 332 of Highway No. 3 this summer have resulted in an improved road surface. Road widening, structural strengthening, drainage improvements, resurfacing, and chipseal all took place on this section of roadway between Behchokò and Yellowknife. Rehabilitation work on the approaches to the Deh Cho Bridge, including reconstruction of the approach shoulders, soil nailing, and asphalt surface repairs were completed earlier this fall and have further strengthened connections along this route.

Along the Ingraham Trail, roadway widening, structural strengthening, drainage improvements, resurfacing, and the application of chipseal took place between kilometres 49 and 51 and this work is substantially complete. Progress was also made on further planning and surveys intended to support the design of additional guardrail installation along this Highway.

Mr. Speaker, rehabilitation of Highway No. 6 from kilometres 28 to 42 were completed this summer. This highway is now completely chipsealed, providing improved comfort and safety to travelers and residents of Fort Resolution.

Highway No. 7 also saw surface improvements between kilometres 137.5 and 153 to help mitigate impacts on the highway's water-susceptible soil.

Mr. Speaker, our northernmost highways also received improvements this summer with brushing and gravel surfacing taking place along the Dempster Highway and the start of reconstruction work on the Inuvik Airport Access Road. The Inuvik Airport Access Road project is now 35% complete.

The final completion inspection for the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk Highway is scheduled for the end of October and all signs, guardrails and delineators will have been installed at that time. The operation of this highway was a success this past year with many tourists visiting the area.

Mr. Speaker, bridges are an essential part of our highway system. It is important to ensure our bridges are maintained and rehabilitated appropriately, which is why our government has a number of bridge projects on the go.

This summer, we completed the rehabilitation of the Buffalo River Bridge on Highway No. 5 which allows the bridge to handle modern highway loads and ensures an extended service life.

Work also began this month on the replacement of the Hay River to Pine Point Bridge on Highway No. 5. The project involves replacing the bridge superstructure and construction is expected to be complete by fall of 2019. Once complete, the bridge will be an open deck bridge to better meet current and projected traffic loads. During rehabilitation, traffic will be diverted to the nearby CN Rail Bridge.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to improving our existing highway system, we are also committed to expanding our system. I'm pleased to say that the Canyon Creek access road near Norman Wells is scheduled to officially open this November. Construction of this road has provided a significant boost to the Sahtu Region.

To date, 84 people have been employed through the Canyon Creek All-Season Access Road Project, 28 of which were local Sahtu residents and 36 of which were Northerners from other parts of the territory. Eight of these individuals are now qualified heavy equipment operators. These training and employment opportunities have allowed residents of the Sahtu to gain valuable skills that will be useful for future projects and opportunities. With this new road, residents will benefit from improved access to traditional hunting, fishing, and other recreational opportunities. The new road could open up potential resource development south of Norman Wells.

Looking ahead, our government is preparing for another active highway construction season with reconstruction work scheduled for sections of Highways No. 1, 3, 4, 7, and 8. This work will be funded under the Government of the Northwest Territories' third bundle of highway capacity improvement projects approved under the New Building Canada Plan and will extend the work done under the previous bundles to support safe travelling, community access roads, and resource development.

Mr. Speaker, our highway system is an essential part of our transportation network. It connects communities and unlocks our economic potential by enabling exploration and development. We will continue to work with the federal government to secure further funding for our short and long-term infrastructure needs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.