

MEMBER'S STATEMENT – GREAT SLAVE -- FEBRUARY 25, 2009

**MACKENZIE VALLEY HIGHWAY**

Thank you Mr. Speaker.

Today you have and will to hear Member's in this house speak passionately about the need to move forward with the Mackenzie Valley Highway. The people of the Mackenzie Valley and the NWT have been saying that it must be built for years. Cece McCauley and her women warriors have been champions for the cause.

The Mackenzie Valley Aboriginal Corporation, or MAC Group, has been actively lobbying the Federal and Territorial Government to proceed with the development of the highway. Historically, Prime Minister John Diefenbaker saw the advantages to developing the road to resources. Under his direction and leadership a vast amount of roads and railways were built in order to open up the northern regions to create easier access to resources. Yet, his vision was never fully realized. A Canadian highway system stretching from Coast to Coast to Coast still does not exist.

The 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Assemblies have identified the Mackenzie Valley Highway as a priority. The 15<sup>th</sup> Assembly developed a proposal titled "Connecting Canada: Coast to Coast to Coast" to complete the Mackenzie Valley Highway to the Arctic Coast and submitted it to the Federal Government in November 2005. This proposal outlined:

- How the Highway will facilitate resource development that will bring significant benefits to all of Canada
- How the Highway will ensure Canada's sovereignty in the North

- How the Highway will improve Canada's northern security and emergency response,
- How the Highway will support the economic and social development of Northerners, and
- How the Highway will improve the North's capacity to adapt to climate change

The proposal is online on the GNWT website and I encourage everyone to give it a read.

In these difficult economic times a national project is required. The GNWT cannot afford to build this national highway and, although important to the residents of the NWT, this must be a federal project. The federal government continues to talk about stimulus projects. The construction of the Mackenzie Valley Highway addresses and supports all of these statements. As a Government, we need to encourage the federal government to complete this national highway project and connect Canada from coast to coast to coast.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.