

**Consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bills and Other Matters
Capital Budget—Dept. of Infrastructure
Road Maintenance Hwy. 3**

September 28, 2017

MS. GREEN: That is correct. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I have some questions that follow on from my Member's statement and the questions and answers earlier today. My questions have to do with how the allocation of money to Highway No. 3 is determined.

It looks like there are two different pots. There is the New Building Canada pot, which is \$18 million over four years ending in 2019, and then there is, let us say, own-source money for structural rehab and chipseal, which comes from the GNWT. I guess I will just start by saying: is that correct? There are the two streams of money for maintenance on Highway No. 3? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The work that is committed on this section of highway is done through a structural assessment of all highways of the Northwest Territories. I think I mentioned in the House here today how much money has been allocated towards that, but above that, there are also the large culvert replacements on the section of highway, chipseal overlay, along with the BCP money that has been allocated towards this section of highway. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Could the Minister tell us the total dollar value that is anticipated for repairs to Highway No. 3 in this capital plan? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Forty-five million dollars from BCP and roughly \$3 million from various other programs; like I said, the culvert replacement and the chipseal. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you to the Minister for that answer. What concerns me is that the amount of money that is allocated to this road is disproportionate to the amount of use this road gets. Why does Highway No. 3 not get more money, considering that it holds 40 per cent of the territory's vehicle traffic? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This highway gets more money than any other highway in the Northwest Territories, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This section of highway has 40 per cent of the

traffic. Is it getting 40 per cent of the rebuilding money? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is not based on the amount of traffic; it is based on structural assessments, as I said, for all highways in the Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. How does the structure of this road compare to the other roads? I am trying to find a rationale for the volume of traffic, the condition it is in, and why it gets so little money compared to the overall highway budget. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Many Members in this House have heard me talk about permafrost degradation and the number of different scientific stations we have placed on this highway. This road is going to continue to settle probably for a number of years, and we are doing the best we can with the allocation of money we get from the federal government to maintain the highway system in the Northwest Territories. We have put significant resources into this road. I have been quoted as saying we could spend all of Infrastructure's DOT money on this section of highway, and we would still be behind the eight ball. We have to prioritize this money among roads across the whole Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I do not know what evidence the Minister has, and I am interested in knowing that money will not make a difference to this road. That is not the information that I have. What evidence does he have that money will not make a difference? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The data we have on permafrost degradation indicates this road is continuing to settle and will probably be continuing to settle for the foreseeable future. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I read a small section of an engineer's report on the road, and I see that it says it is settling. Climate change is making a difference in the temperatures, and the permafrost is thawing, and so on and so on. Is there no way for the government to make strategic investments to improve this road? I mean, the road really is terrible by anyone's estimation. Even within the confines of the melting permafrost, is there nothing more that can be done? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. If you look at the money that has been spent on this road since 2015 coming forward, the worst sections were tackled

first, and we continue to work on them as we come forward. 2017-2018 and 2018-2017 involves addressing the latest sections that have the most difficult situations with them, and we will continue to invest in this highway to make it as safe as possible for residents in the Northwest Territories. As I have said, there are a number of considerations put into place, but it is a structural assessments of all highways in the Northwest Territories and the amount of money that we have allocated to this department to address the needs across the broader Northwest Territories. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I understand what the Minister is saying. I want to move on to managing expectations. That seems to be one of the major issues with this road. There is no write-up about it in Spectacular NWT. There is nothing that prepares the driver for the condition of this road until they are driving this road. Is there something more the Minister can do to communicate the condition of the road to the people who are using it who are coming to the road for the first time? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I do not think any jurisdiction in Canada is going to go out there and publicize in their tourism information pamphlets the condition of their highways across this country. What is posted is the speed limits, and that is what is posted along the highway. It is based on the condition of the highway for safe-travelling public to travel on this section of highway, and that is what we will continue to do. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate that the Minister does not want to advertise that the road is in terrible condition, but what if, in addition to the speed limits, there was some sort of information about permafrost degradation, like a sign in a roadside pull-out that explained what was going on with the road so that people had some understanding of why the road is a roller coaster? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Ms. Green. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I can take that back to my officials and have a look at that. Maybe we can look at at least posting it on our web site and get that type of information out there. We will have that under advisement. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you, Minister. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate the Minister's willingness to take it back to his department. I think that we know that climate change is real in the North. This is an example of how real it is, and I think it would be informative for motorists to know that this is what climate change looks like.

My last area is about operations and maintenance money for the new roads, the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk highway and the Whati road. Are those costs factored into the road? We are saying we need \$67 million for the road to Whati. Does that include maintenance

money, or is there a segment of the budget that does include that? Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Minister. One minute left.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. The \$67 million is part of the capital costs for constructing the Whati road. For O and M maintenance, that will be built into the O and M budgets. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Ms. Green.

MS. GREEN: What I want to understand is whether the O and M and the additional capital costs of repairs are built into the total costs of this road right from now. Thank you.

CHAIRPERSON (Mr. Simpson): Thank you. Minister.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. If we are talking about the Whati road, that is built in with the P3 project. They are responsible for that road for the next 25 years. Thank you, Mr. Chair.