

ORAL QUESTION—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

QUESTION 901-18(2): ROAD CONDITIONS ON HIGHWAY NO. 3

September 28, 2017

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Infrastructure. As I said in my statement, the condition of Highway No. 3 from Behchoko to Yellowknife is a problem for residents, freight trucks, and tourists alike. This road has four times the traffic of any other highway in the NWT. My question for the Minister is: why doesn't the maintenance budget match the heavy use of this road? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Minister of Infrastructure.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe our maintenance budget is sufficient to maintain the road for particularly the wintertime. I think the issue around Highway No. 3 between here and Behchoko is the infrastructure deficit that's out there because of permafrost degradation, and the department is working to address that as we go forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MS. GREEN: Let's call it an infrastructure deficit. The question is still: what are you going to do about it?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: The department received \$18 million under the Building Canada Plan to address this section of road, and we will continue to spend that until that is exhausted and then we can find external funds to continue on working on that road.

MS. GREEN: Mr. Speaker, \$18 million sounds like a lot of money, but in the context of the department's whole budget, it isn't. The fact is that the department is committed to providing a safe operating surface, and that's not what we have. Can the Minister give us an estimate of what it would actually cost to provide a safe operating surface from Yellowknife to Behchoko?

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: We already provide a safe operating surface if you drive to the speed limit that is posted on the highway. It is a posted speed limit that makes it safe to commute on that section of highway, and we will continue to monitor the situation going forward.

MR. SPEAKER: Masi. Oral questions. Member for Yellowknife Centre.

MS. GREEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the NWT Housing Corporation won't build additional housing without additional operations and maintenance money. Has the Department of Infrastructure considered this approach? What is the point of pouring money into new roads like the Inuvik to Tuktoyaktuk highway and the Whati road where there obviously isn't enough money for maintenance? Mahsi.

HON. WALLY SCHUMANN: When we put these proposals forward, it's the mandate of

this Legislative Assembly what we bring forward. We have three sections of highway that are put forward for infrastructure; the Whati Road, the Mackenzie Valley Highway, the Slave Geological Road. That is not a decision that I've made on my own; that is a decision that all Members in this Assembly have addressed to bring forward as a commitment of this Assembly, and we will work within those parameters and try to figure out where the money can come from to build these roads. That's what I've set out to do in my mandate, and I will continue to do that, and we will work within those parameters.