

MEMBER STATEMENT—JULIE GREEN, MLA YELLOWKNIFE CENTRE

INUVIK TO TUKTOYAKTUK HIGHWAY

May 25, 2018

MS. GREEN: Mahsi, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Tuktoyaktuk road. Come the thaw, we have all heard the sad stories of the road closure. Major stretches of the road have dissolved into a slushy mess. An Inuvik Drum headline offers the optimistic forecast "Highway to remain open in the summer," and the best flattery from an engineer responsible for the project is that it won't "go to snot". Air service to the community was re-established last week as motorists took flight from a highway they can't depend on, despite it being an all-weather road, to get them there or get them home. The RV grapevine will be sending out red alerts, not just on the road closure, but on the conditions. So much for the tourism government is promoting this week. Once again, the government is snatching defeat from the jaws of victory with poor messaging.

The Minister recently provided us with an update, indicating that, depending on the weather, the road will reopen tomorrow after a 17-day closure. The Minister says some sections haven't been completed, are "susceptible to saturation," and require final gravel overlay and grading. He refers to these actions not as construction but as "repairs."

We know the government cut back on the originally designed depth of topping put on the road in order to keep the road on the predicted budget. It looks like we are going back to Plan A, depth of topping, begging the question of when construction under the projected budget ends and when the long bleed of mega-maintenance begins. The problem is the government's own making. They announced the road was complete and set those associated expectations, when clearly the road is not complete.

I am not looking to embarrass the government, but I've continually said the roads as an economic engine policy is wrong, especially when it leaves many of our residents living in squalid housing for want of money spent on roads. The \$300 million bulge of roads spending has passed, and I see no economic bonanza commensurate to the expense. In fact, new tourism-related businesses that the government has invested in may now be floundering because of the condition the road is in.

The road to Tuktoyaktuk could join the Deh Cho bridge as a quagmire of failed fiscal management, just at the time we turn our budgets towards the Tlicho road.

If the government is stuck on this course, they have to get the projects right. Mahsi, Mr. Speaker.