

Gwich'inat Eenjit
Gàdatr'igwijiłcheii Gidilii
Gwich'in nan, nakhwek'pıu ts'at gwıl'ıl
łthak nakhwılavee gwıłheezaa eenjit



Gwich'in Tribal Council
Gwich'in land, culture & economy for a better future

October 9, 2009

FAXED

The Editor, News/North

Dear Sir:

I would like to personally congratulate the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Chuck Strahl for his recent decision to fund \$975,000.00 for the design and engineering and consultation phase of the Inuvik - Tuktoyuktuk portion of the all-weather highway from Wrigley to Tuktoyuktuk. In my view, all NWT residents will ultimately benefit from an all-weather road network from Wrigley to Tuktoyuktuk, one that would connect the Arctic Ocean and the Mackenzie Valley to the rest of Canada.

Since my election as President for the Gwich'in Tribal Council representing the Gwich'in Nation, I have made a concerted effort to lobby Aboriginal Leaders and the governments of Canada and the NWT to support the construction of an all-weather highway from Wrigley to Inuvik and from Inuvik to Tuktoyuktuk. While I know that this project will provide employment and business opportunities to NWT residents, I believe the lasting advantages will be the sustainable economic and investment opportunities that will be provided for businesses, NWT residents and Canadians.

This investment in basic infrastructure will help our region create more vibrant regional and local economies and take advantage of the abundant natural resources in our territory. The social and economic benefits which will result in business growth and employment are clear but there are other tangible benefits created by decreasing high living costs, reducing isolation, and the potential benefit of minimizing the environmental footprint through the development of a transportation corridor. We would create a transportation corridor that could incorporate a fiber optic line which will improve the communication network and system in the NWT. We could create a level of connectivity in the North that other regions in Canada take for granted. Improved TeleHealth and long distance education are but just a few examples of additional benefits for our youth and families. Isolation can be barrier for future generations who need to go beyond existing borders to take advantage of personal growth and development in a sustainable manner.

On behalf of the Gwich'in Nation, I have provided both the Premier of the NWT and the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs a proposal for preliminary design and engineering work for an all-weather highway heading south from Inuvik. I am optimistic that the two governments will also provide a commitment of funds for the construction of this segment of the Mackenzie Highway.

I anticipate that other regional leaders will join me in questioning the candidates for the next federal election about how they and their party would support the construction of the all-weather highway from Tuktoyuktuk to Inuvik and Inuvik to Wrigley.

As a result of my recent experiences working with elected leaders in Ottawa, I am of the view that residents of the Gwich'in Settlement Area and those of the NWT are best served by a strong elected voice - someone who will be part of a team that could form the federal government or is an individual who will speak to and directly engage Ministers about the priorities of the people of the NWT. We are prepared to work with our present Member of Parliament or any other Member of Parliament that will assist in presenting the importance and the value of this infrastructure to NWT residents, industry and to Canada.

I remain open to working with all elected Leaders to complete this Project.

Richard Nerysoo, President

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