

Ministry of Agriculture
BRIEFING NOTE FOR DEPUTY MINISTER FOR INFORMATION FOR MEETING

Ref: 190243

Date: May 13, 2019

Title: Joint Deputy Minister's meeting on the current status of the North Peace rural road network and the implications for residents, Aboriginal communities and industry.

Issue: Rural Roads Task Force in the Northeast

Background:

- The North Peace Economic Development Commission established and funded a Rural Roads Task Force (RRTF) between 1997 and 2003.
- In 2003 the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI) established a Regional Transportation Advisory Committee throughout the province based on the success of the RRTF and activities continued until 2007/2008.
- The RRTF benefited government and created a return on investment for infrastructure funding by creating certainty for industry, shortening travel cycle times, reducing duration of annual load restrictions, increasing competitiveness of the region and made the area attractive for private sector investment leading to increased royalties for government, more jobs for workers and a stronger economy.
- In 2017 the North Peace Economic Development Commission recalled the RRTF – comprised of new and old local government and industry committee members. Its purpose was to raise awareness of the social and economic dependencies on the local rural road network and to advocate for investment for improvements.
- The Infrastructure Royalty Credit Program has expired and there is no guarantee it will be renewed. The program allowed oil and gas industry to apply for a deduction to the royalties they would otherwise pay. The deduction could be as much as 50 per cent of the cost of building roads or pipelines that were approved under the program.

First Nations Considerations:

- One priority area the RRTF identified for improvements, particularly along the Beaton Airport Road, Doig/Milligan Creek, and Peterson's Crossing would impact road users and residents of the local First Nations, including Blueberry River First Nation and Doig River First Nation.

Discussion:

- The scope of the RRTF is roads and related infrastructure under the direction of MOTI located in the North Peace that primarily serves rural residents and industry.
 - Membership includes representatives of rural residents, the agriculture industry, the forestry industry, the oil and gas industry, and the transportation industry in the North Peace.
- This group acknowledges the significant investments that have been committed and delivered over the past two decades, but feels it has lost momentum.
- In winter of 2018 the RRTF presented an updated report on the state of North Peace rural roads to MOTI. The report outlined their concerns, recommendations and priorities.
- The group is seeking incremental, sustained investment to rural roads in the North Peace to ensure a safe, reliable road network capable of withstanding the types and volumes of traffic that uses them.
- The task force is concerned about the condition of rural roads and highways due to the impacts of heavy industrial truck traffic. For example, the installation of one gas wellsite can result in upwards of 1,000 trucks per day. These roads are heavily used by industry and they are prone to rapid

deterioration when industry is active due to heavy use, weak soil conditions and extreme temperature swings.

- Annually, MOTI has performed works such as dust control, gravelling, base repairs, hard-surfacing and safety improvements in order to support rural residents and mitigate industrial road impacts.
- MOTI understands the importance of investing in the provincial highway and side road network to support economic growth in northern B.C.
- The natural gas industry does require the use of large industrial vehicles to explore and extract natural gas in the region.
- MOTI understands that supporting rural residents through these industrial impacts is important to local communities and they will continue to endeavour to support the rural road network.
- MOTI continues to fund programs to preserve and rehabilitate rural roads in the Peace District; including:
 - Spending \$20M on roads throughout the Peace in 2018 to mitigate the impact of industrial use on Peace roads.
 - In addition, the MOTI spent over \$3M in 2018 responding to slides and washouts that occurred over the spring and early summer.
- Agriculture challenges with some rural roads include:
 - Some hard surfaced rural roads are high and narrow, with no shoulders and steep ditches severely impacting the agriculture industry ability to move large farm implements.

Note: Some of the background and discussion information was taken from a 2018 UBCM note provided by MOTI

Suggested Response:

- Ensure agriculture stakeholders remain represented on the RRTF

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