

## **SUBJECT: Northern Roads Expansion and Enhancement**

### **SUBMITTED BY: Investment and Growth Committee**

#### **BACKGROUND/ISSUE**

The expansion, maintenance and improvement of Saskatchewan's roads has long been a heated topic of discussion in Saskatchewan. Since there is such a vast network of roads to maintain in the southern half of the province, the development of northern roads has not often been a topic of much discussion outside of northern communities.

It is partly due to the additional cost of constructing roads in remote and relatively unpopulated locations that the development of a more sophisticated northern road network has not taken place. As P3 (Public-Private Partnership) arrangements become more common, it is time for both the Government of Saskatchewan and private enterprises to explore ways of enhancing our network of northern roadways and other related infrastructure.

This is not a project that either governments or the business community can address without the cooperation of the other. There will have to be a variety of agreements reached between the public and private sector in regard to the kinds of roads that should be built, road maintenance, road locations and the determination of a priority list. Only with the pooling of financial and operational resources can such a large project be undertaken.

The planned expansion of the mining and milling segments of the uranium sector is clearly an opportunity with great benefit for the province. The potential for greater exploration and identification of high quality sites is growing as the ease of access to northern sites increases. The less it costs to get people and equipment to a site, the more exploration can be done. The benefits to tourism, forestry, local economic development and reduced operating costs for health care, education and other services provided by government are positive and will become more evident with better roads.

The main highways in the northeast part of the province are routes that require primary focus because most of the current and future uranium mining takes place in that area.

While the business community would certainly benefit from easier access to northern resources, the existing communities in the north would also benefit from greater contact with the southern parts of the province. The price of everyday necessities such as milk, fuel, clothing and other staple consumer products would decrease considerably as the cost of transporting them to the communities would decrease. On February 27, 2014 a 4 litre container of milk in Stony Rapids was \$11.59, a 1 dozen carton of eggs was \$4.49 and in La Ronge the prices were \$6.35 and \$2.85 respectively.

While northern roads and infrastructure development has not been an issue that has attracted much attention by the provincial government in the past, now would be an excellent opportunity for elected officials, the business community and the various government entities to explore ways in which all the groups could work together to develop a plan to develop Saskatchewan's northern frontier.

**RECOMMENDED**

1) That the Government of Saskatchewan form and lead a coalition of partners from the private and public sector to create a definitive plan to build new northern roads and enhance existing northern roads to ensure that there is a suitable foundation for economic and social development. This plan should have the necessary funding commitments in place by the end of 2014 and the full implementation of the plan should be completed by 2018.