



Government of Yukon

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NEWSrelease

FOR RELEASE #10-146

August 4, 2010

Melting permafrost is a threat to northern Yukon highways

WHITEHORSE – The Yukon government will provide additional funding to repair a degraded section of the north Alaska Highway between Destruction Bay and the Alaska border.

"The effects of climate change on permafrost require additional resources. Further investment will help Yukon communities and ensure travellers are safe on our highways," Highways and Public Works Minister Archie Lang said.

Permafrost is defined as ground that remains at or below 0° Celsius for two or more years. Temperature increases cause permafrost to melt and the road to heave and sink. These effects of melting permafrost are evident along parts of the northern highway corridors.

Climate change has added a new layer of uncertainty and risks for Yukon highways. Yukon highways rely on ice properties for long-term stability. The warmer conditions through the winter months have resulted in more melting permafrost during this summer season.

In addition to immediate rehabilitation work, the Department of Highways and Public Works in conjunction with the State of Alaska, the United States Federal Highways Administration, Transport Canada, Laval University and the Alaska University Transportation Centre have embarked on a long-term permafrost testing project. The test site is along the Alaska Highway located near Beaver Creek. The information derived from this unique project will help develop strategies to mitigate the effects of melting permafrost.

"The Government of Yukon is committed to the future of Yukon's road infrastructure and recognizes the importance of the Alaska Highway as integral to both Americans and Canadians. Developing a better understanding about melting permafrost will allow us to better treat the problem and develop long-term economical solutions," Lang added.

The project to repair the degraded section of the Alaska Highway will commence this fall. Tenders are now open for public bids on this project.

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