



Minister-led Indigenous Roundtable on the Future of Transportation

November 2, 2016, 12:00PM to 1:30PM | Ottawa, ON

Summary of Discussion

The meeting was conducted under Chatham House Rule: “When a meeting, or part thereof, is held under the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed.”

Notes on Roundtable Discussion:

The roundtable sought Indigenous representatives’ input on the direction for the future of transportation in Canada, in support of the government’s commitment to a renewed, nation-to-nation relationship with Indigenous Peoples. The roundtable sought to identify the most pressing transportation concerns and opportunities from the perspective of the Indigenous representatives to inform the path forward on improving the Canadian transportation system, while balancing environmental protection with socio-economic objectives.

Highlights of Indigenous representatives’ comments follow, grouped according to questions shared in advance of the roundtable.

1. What are the key transportation-related challenges faced by Indigenous communities?

- Indigenous Peoples are diverse and so are the challenges faced with respect to transportation.
- The cost of transportation adds to the cost of food, goods, housing, and services such as health care for Indigenous Peoples.
- Marine shipping, as well as inadequate environmental protection from the impacts of shipping, remain key issues for coastal communities. Coastal communities are of the view that they have very limited influence in the movement of vessels through sensitive areas.
- The absence of an overall framework to assess and manage cumulative impacts of shipping and land use was noted, along with the need for studies on salmon habitat protection and ancient remains sites. These studies should involve Indigenous title holders.
- The transportation infrastructure deficit in Northern communities is a challenge as its absence leads to lost economic potential. For example, Nunavut is experiencing economic leakage from the off-loading and processing of fish catches from Baffin Bay in Greenland, for which Nunavut does not have the needed infrastructure to facilitate such activity.
- Concerns about safety issues that can arise as a result of transportation is a challenge. For example, it is important that highways through remote areas be safe for people travelling alone, especially women.
- Issues around the *Indian Act* and its impacts on First Nations’ participation in transportation are a challenge.



- The lack of an overarching process, along with a strategy, which would incorporate significant concerns such as climate change, poverty and quality of life, and food security.
 - In the past, funding has largely been ad hoc and Northern communities have been excluded from the majority of past federal infrastructure programs, due to criteria limitations/requirements that did not reflect Northern conditions/needs.
- 2. What opportunities are available for making progress on addressing these challenges? What actions could be undertaken to move towards a transportation system that supports inclusive economic growth, a cleaner economy, and a country that remains well-positioned to compete globally?**
- Given the pattern of lack of consultation in the history of transportation development in Canada, deeper engagement is needed. To this end, consultation should be based on a nation-to-nation, government-to-government basis, not through organizations. Title and rights holders should be consulted directly.
 - With respect to marine shipping on the coast, Coastal communities could contribute to the designation of areas to avoid and ship-to-shore communication protocols.
 - Indigenous title holders could contribute to studies that inform broader cumulative impacts assessments of shipping and land use.
 - Given that the *Navigable Waters Protection Act* was replaced without the consent of Indigenous Peoples and important environmental protections were removed from federal legislation, previous environmental protections could be restored and the role of Indigenous Traditional Knowledge could be legally recognized.
 - The federal government could recognize and incorporate the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, as well as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples to further the nation-to-nation relationship.
 - To allow the federal government to achieve free, prior, and informed consent in relation to transportation projects, it could engage early and often and be respectful of Indigenous People's rights and interests, regardless of status, when assessing the impact of transportation projects.
 - Federal officials could work with National Indigenous Organizations, as well as provincial, territorial and municipal governments to ensure that duties are being met, and could provide adequate resources to organizations and communities to build successful and sustainable relationships.
 - The Council of the Federation could be leveraged. The federal government could provide funds to facilitate a meaningful process to address a broader range of issues, such as transportation.
 - First Nations on the coast have proposed working with the government to develop a regional shipping management plan, and have proposed that a new marine emergency response centre be established. There was also support for the development, with provincial officials, of geographic response plans to improve marine emergency response through the region.



- A moratorium on oil tankers transiting Northern B.C. waters would help promote certainty, marine safety and environmental stewardship.
- There are opportunities for enhanced use of Indigenous Traditional Knowledge, a key element for moving forward. Coastal communities know the waters better than anyone and there are similar needs in planning road and air routes.
- Improved ferry service to coastal communities could improve economic development opportunities, for example in fisheries.
- To reduce the infrastructure gap that Indigenous communities currently face and the challenges it creates, Indigenous suppliers and businesses could be engaged, creating a direct link between transportation development projects and local Indigenous economies.
- Stipulations could be attached to federal infrastructure funds to ensure that:
 - a. Indigenous communities be engaged and consulted on project development and design;
 - b. Indigenous businesses have the opportunity to retain a stake in all projects, either as contractors or as a part of the supply chain;
 - c. Employment targets are set for Indigenous persons in all aspects of projects; and
 - d. Apprenticeship opportunities be established along with a process to address concerns from businesses and unions.
- Given that groups of companies have had great success with infrastructure projects in Canada, a key is to ensure that procurement policies have clear objectives related to Indigenous participation and are tracked accordingly. Financing options would need to be made available to support this participation.
- The participation of Inuit organizations would benefit the development of Canada's domestic Arctic policy.
- Despite higher costs involved in operating in the north, Canada should look to the Arctic as an economic opportunity. The federal government periodically assists major transportation companies in the south, and consideration should be given towards similar subsidies for Northern transportation operators.
- There should be long-term infrastructure plans for the North, as well as a dedicated infrastructure fund, as these would help address the challenges of attracting private investment in the North.
- The federal government could consider a tax structure to support Northern infrastructure investment as well as support for economic planning, which needs to take into account unique northern factors.
- Indigenous Peoples could be encouraged to participate on the boards of directors of transportation entities, such as airport and port authorities, to allow their voices to be heard when it comes to decisions around transportation.



- 3. How can the government incorporate Indigenous Traditional Knowledge into the transportation evidence base, and in what ways do transportation needs have to evolve to better support Indigenous communities?**
- There is support for the increased incorporation of Indigenous Traditional Knowledge in relation to transportation decision-making.
 - The federal government should provide assistance to enable Indigenous organizations to expand their registers of Indigenous Traditional Knowledge holders to maximize their contributions to the infrastructure projects that will be developed across Canada.
 - The *Species at Risk Act* is a prime example of federal legislation that relied on Indigenous Peoples in its design, which has resulted in the incorporation of Indigenous Traditional Knowledge.
 - In order to better incorporate Indigenous Traditional Knowledge and evidence-based approaches, data collection in Indigenous communities must increase. Data needs to be gathered and then analyzed at the local level; this cannot be done from Ottawa. Collection and analysis capacity should be increased at the local level.