

Raising the profile of Grays Bay Port and Road

'Nation-building' port and road project promoted in Ottawa, Edmonton



A 3D model of the Grays Bay Port and Road project is put on display at the Ekaluktutiak Cambridge Bay Hunters and Trappers office earlier this year. Support for the \$500-million project was sought at the Opportunities North economic development conference in Edmonton in September. The project has also been showcased at trade shows in Toronto and Vancouver.

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by Derek Neary
Northern News Services
Nunavut

The proposed \$500-million Grays Bay port and road in the central Arctic has been pitched in Ottawa, Toronto, Vancouver and, more recently, Edmonton.

The Kitikmeot Inuit Association and its Nunavut Resources Corporation sent a delegation at the Opportunities North economic development forum in Edmonton, Sept. 12-14, to promote project benefits. The Grays Bay Port and Road would establish the only deep-water port in the central Arctic and create a 230-km all-season road to the former Jericho diamond mine, which is connected to Yellowknife by a winter road.

Both the Chamber of Commerce and the City agreed to write letters of support, said Scott Northey, chief operating officer of Nunavut Resources Corporation.

"The response was overwhelmingly favourable," Northey said. "A lot of people said this is transformative to the region. They could see tremendous opportunities for the City of Edmonton and tremendous opportunities in terms of improving access to the interior (of the territories)

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FILE

GRAYS BAY BENEFITS

TO NUNAVUT:

- Generates significant amounts of employment for Northern residents in a region that currently suffers very high levels of unemployment
- Connects to the rest of Canada and the world
- Improves food security and reduces the cost of living in western Nunavut communities
- Provides Nunavut communities with seasonal access to goods and services from the NWT and beyond via a new overland route

BENEFITS TO CANADA:

- A GDP boost of \$7.6 billion over a 15-year period just with the development of MMG Canada's Izok Corridor Project in concert with the Grays Bay road and port infrastructure (Nunavut's GDP will increase \$5.1 billion)
- The strengthening of Northern sovereignty, safety and security
- The provision of cost effective and climate change resilient transportation options for diamond mines in the NWT, potentially extending the operating lives of these economically important projects

Source: Office of Nunavut Senator Dennis Patterson

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for mineral exploration, mine development and access to the Coronation Gulf to improve community resupply."

Some expediting firm representatives declared that "the value proposition here is massive," said Northey.

Potential benefits extend beyond Nunavut and into the NWT. A growing number of observers are convinced that shipping supplies to NWT mines would be cheaper by barge and driving south from Grays Bay as opposed to the Tibbitt to Contwoyto winter road from the south, Northey noted. In addition, Grays Bay provides the diamond mines with a backup option when the winter road season is shortened due to mild weather, he added, at least until – or if – the Tibbitt to Contwoyto is converted to an all-weather road.

The Government of Nunavut recently committed \$2 million to advance the concept of a Grays Bay road and port through an environmental screening by the Nunavut Impact Review Board. The regulatory board will examine the proposed deep-water port on the Coronation Gulf and the accompanying all-season road. The review board will then send a recommendation to the federal minister of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada on whether further screening is advised.

"We are beginning to shape the potential development of Nunavut's economic future with nation-building infrastructure" said Monica Ell-Kanayuk, Nunavut's minister of economic development and transportation, upon freeing up the \$2 million in funding.

The Government of Nunavut and Inuit proponents are responsible for raising 25 per cent of costs for the road and port. The remaining \$375 mil-

lion would consume almost all of what the Government of Canada has earmarked for Northern projects through the National Trade Corridors Fund.

However, a major funding commitment from the federal government could spur industry to put forth a share of the cost, Northey said. For example, Chinese-owned MMG Resources needs the road and port infrastructure in place to make its massive Izok Corridor lead, zinc and copper deposits economically feasible, he noted.

"They recognize that they're going to have to pay for their use in some capacity," Northey said.

Nunavut Senator Dennis Patterson also describes Grays Bay as a "nation-building project."

"This is an Inuit-led project in partnership with the Government of Nunavut. The KIA has secured the support of all the communities in the Kitikmeot, so I am confident that this is a project that the communities want and need. All this augurs well for the project as it heads to the NIRB for review," stated Patterson, who wrote a letter to Transport Canada Minister Marc Garneau in January to lobby for the project.

Nunavut presently lacks any major road infrastructure and has very little marine infrastructure despite having Canada's longest coastline, Patterson noted. The lack of roads and ports contributes to mining costs that are three times higher in the North compared to the south, the senator pointed out.

He added that Grays Bay would also provide a "western transportation hub for shipping" and thereby reinforce Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic, which is one of the federal government's objectives.

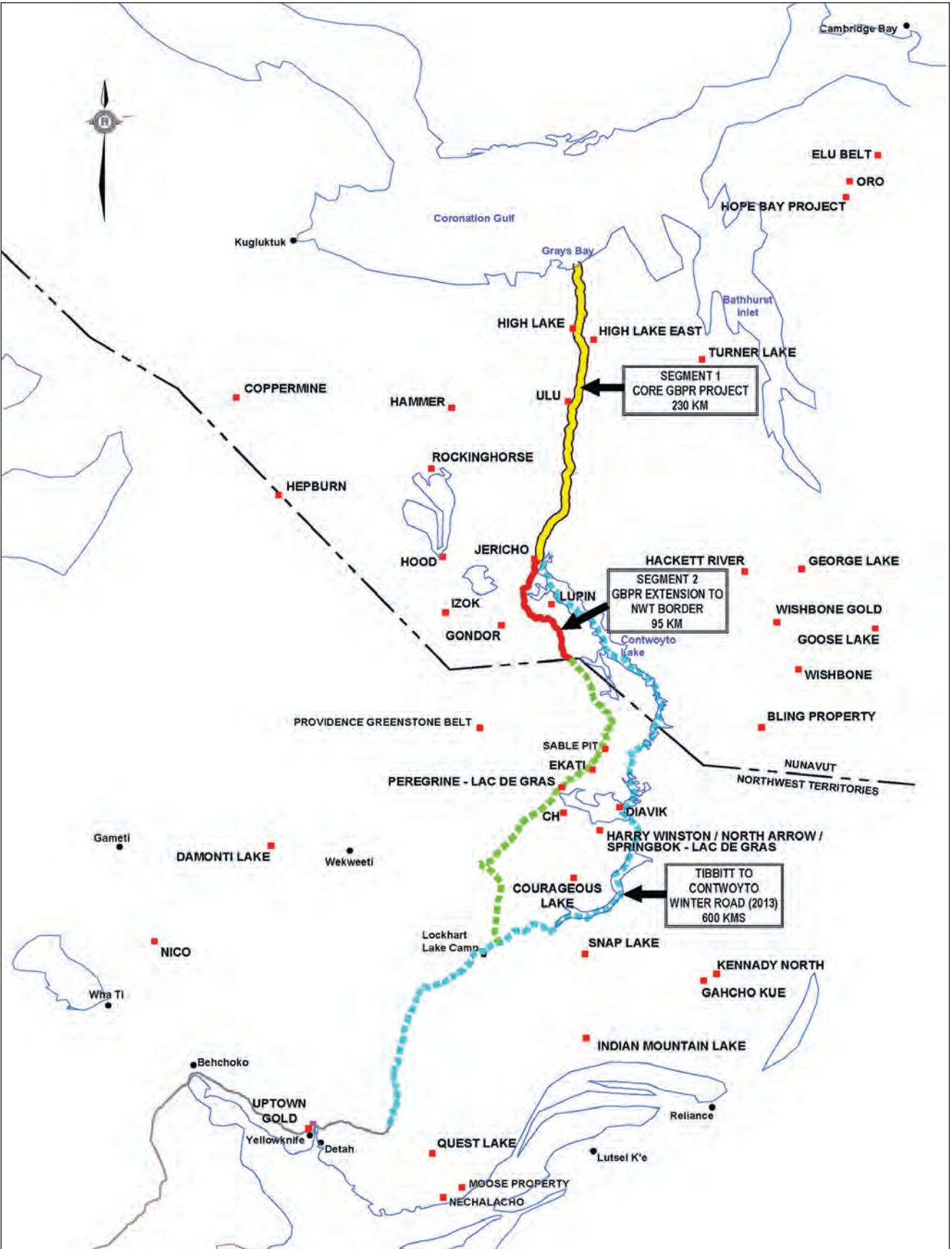


Image courtesy of Nunavut Resources Corporation

The Grays Bay Port and Road would establish the only deep-water port in the central Arctic and create a 230-km all-season road to the former Jericho diamond mine.



GAHCHO KUE
TURNS ONE

Gahcho Kue diamond mine, a joint venture between DeBeers Canada and Mountain Province Diamonds and one of the largest new diamond mines in the world, celebrated its first official birthday this fall, after opening in September 2016.

Jessica Davey-Quantick/NNSL photo