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Investing in the north is investing in Canada's future

But we need to make sure that we are investing smartly and taking the voice of northerners into account.

Conservative Senator Dennis Patterson

"Political equality cannot come without economic equality."

That's a quote from a recent discussion paper on the Arctic Policy Framework entitled, We Are One Mind. Funded by the Gordon Foundation, We Are One Mind is the product of a collaborative effort by three northern youth groups-Dene Naho, based in the N.W.T.; Our Voices, primarily based in Yukon; and Qanak, an Inuit organization. It's a clarion call for attention to the needs of 40 per cent of Canada which lies above the 60th parallel.

The paper makes several recommendations focused on: ensuring northern engagement in the drafting and implementation of the revised Arctic Policy Framework; increasing northern representation and northern-based scientific research; preserving Indigenous culture in the north; and creating strong communities and economies.

There are many recommendations that I support, and several that I believe are interconnected. For instance, the group calls on the federal government to "instruct the Infrastructure **Bank of Canada** to undertake nation-building level investments in housing, ports, road, energy, and waste management to positively impact the cost of living in the North for all northerners, as well as add an additional category for broadband and renewable energies to be considered under the bank's programming."

In Nunavut, the Grays Bay Road and Port project is rapidly advancing. Identified as one of Nunavut's top five infrastructure priorities by the Government of Nunavut, this nation-building project would provide an all-weather north to south alternative to resupply for the N.W.T.'s three diamond mines, which may well be threatened by melting ice-roads due to climate change and would also make the well-known Izok Lake and High Lake zinc mine financially viable, with access to tidewater. It would also surely attract more potential investments in mining in the rich Slave Geological Province. This would be the first road from southern Canada to our country's longest coast in Nunavut and its port will be a new hub for community resupply and shipping in the region and a western port on the Arctic coast for the **Royal Canadian Navy** and Coast Guard

It is envisioned by the Kitikmeot Inuit Association and the Government of Nunavut, joint proponents of the project, who will raise 25 per cent of its \$500-million cost, that the federal government portion of this project will rely on the newly-created Infrastructure Bank and another envelope of federal funding: the National Trade Corridors Fund. Since Nunavut is in need of many community infrastructure upgrades - almost every community is out of compliance with its water use license-a requirement recently proposed by federal officials that the Government of Nunavut must draw from existing community funding to contribute to the Grays Bay Road and Port Project would compete with key infrastructure upgrades also on Nunavut's priority list: water and sewer, solid waste and replacement of outdated diesel generators (the only sources of power in every Nunavut community).

Nunavut and northern Canada was left in the cold when national transportation corridors like the Canadian Pacific Railway, the TransCanada Highway and federal ports on the east and west coasts were built. Our opportunity to apply for vital transportation infrastructure essential to promote economic growth and reduce the exorbitant costs of living in the north should not be pitted against vital community infrastructure projects.

Our Voices also calls on the government to "approach federal investments in health, social services, and education, on a multi-year basis and remove unnecessary restrictions that inhibit adaptation of programming to northern circumstances, as well as co-develop evaluations procedures that are in line with these circumstances".

We have seen in the past that the boom-bust cycle of resource development in northern and remote areas can leave some communities devastated by addiction, suicide, and a general lack of investment into the long-term health and growth of a community.

If the road goes forward, it will therefore also be necessary to make parallel investments that help ensure communities, families, and individuals are well supported for the rapid change that will impact a developing economy with high

unemployment from the impacts of a new industry or resource development project.

Inuit-specific mental health services funding, for instance, would help ensure that prospective employees are able to handle the stress of being away from family and their support network for weeks at a time, surrounded by many new faces from other parts of Nunavut and Canada. Education programs targeted at wealth management and skills development would not only help northerners maximize the influx of resource revenues generated, but ensure long-term financial stability.

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Dennis Patterson is a Conservative Senator for Nunavut.

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