

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **Highway of Hope: Transportation Symposium Sets Stage for Wide-Ranging Collaboration**

SMITHERS, BC – In a banquet room bursting with chiefs, mayors, elders, municipal councilors, regional district chairs, and both provincial and municipal staff, the focus is on transportation. But for the association representing all local governments from 100 Mile House to the Yukon border, this one-day gathering is a harbinger of much more.

"There has already been a lot of good work that has gone on in B.C. on this initiative, but this is the genesis of a new relationship, of working together in partnership," says Laurey-Anne Roodenburg, Vice President of the North Central Local Government Association.

"At the grassroots level, northern communities have realized for quite some time that we need to work together to solve big-ticket items. Obviously, transportation along the Highway 16 corridor is one of those. All of us in the north, both aboriginal and non-aboriginal, need to put our heads together and come up with some practical, doable, collaborative solutions."

The first of its kind event is an eight-hour power session according to BC's youngest mayor and NCLGA board member, Luke Strimbold. "There definitely is a 'let's get this done' attitude here today. Ultimately, northern BC is really like a big neighbourhood. We know the issues, and we want to improve the neighbourhood. This type of event where everyone is present, and where everyone can speak to the issue is a huge step forward on that front."

The Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure and the First Nations Health Authority have been consulting community leaders along the Highway 16 corridor for over a year and have compiled some very helpful feedback for delegates to consider.

"We have to give big kudos to the Ministry and to the First Nations Health Authority for doing the heavy lifting on this," says Roodenburg. "And I think it's notable that they aren't guiding things at all today; they're really just setting the stage for some great collaboration."

However, Roodenburg reminds all that this is not the final step in the process, and participants are cautious about firm deadlines. "There are a lot of things to consider here moving forward, and a lot of pieces will need to be pulled out and worked on. But, the big take away is that we're working together."

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*Established in 1955, the North Central Local Government Association is a coalition of local governments that advocate for a prosperous and sustainable North Central British Columbia. Our jurisdiction covers 70% of BC's landmass and includes nearly 60% of the Province's Aboriginal population.*

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