

Transportation Infrastructure

Nunavut, with its two million square kilometres of area, is an open landscape covering vast regions. Transportation has had to adapt to the particular aspects of a territory that accounts for two-thirds of Canada's coastline and seven of the twelve largest islands in the country. Today all communities have a port and an airport.

Rivers still play an important role as transportation routes in summer, but access to modern, diversified modes of transport has radically changed the living habits of Nunavut's inhabitants. Local movements in and around villages require jeeps, trucks and school buses, while four-wheel-drive all-terrain vehicles can be seen everywhere in the less populated communities. There is a single negotiable road outside the communities - it links the Nanisivik mine to the port facilities of Arctic Bay (32 kilometres away). For trips over longer distances, the snowmobile has replaced the dogsled in winter for the most part, while small aluminum motorboats have long since replaced the traditional kayak on the rivers in summer.

Nunavut is synonymous with enormous distances between communities and vast areas of permafrost. In this environment, aircraft has proven to be the ideal form of transportation for speedy travel. This transportation mode has developed rapidly, to the point that all communities are served on an almost daily basis. Major companies and smaller carriers now provide rapid links with the cities to the south. Air transport also plays a major role in the contribution of visitors to the economy of a number of communities.

However, shipping is still the most important transportation method, since the resupply in oil and other basic products from the south is done mostly by sea. In addition, a certain amount of merchandise from commercial activities and the mining industry passes through Iqaluit, Nanisivik and Baker Lake on its way south. Even though fishing continues to be very widespread in the territory as a whole, most of the commercial fishery is at Rankin Inlet, Cambridge Bay and Iqaluit.

The transportation links will continue to grow. Certain economic sectors have been identified as having high development potential. New projects in hydrocarbon and ore development, sport hunting and fishing, tourism and ecotourism are only a few of the areas which will allow the various modes of transportation to better serve Nunavut Territory.