

# ROAD STORY

A road stretching the length of the **NWT's Mackenzie Valley** has been discussed for more than 70 years. With the federal government preparing to spend billions on infrastructure projects to stimulate the economy, will a plan to build the road be hatched before the pot runs dry?

The Mackenzie Valley winter road north of Wrigley is "lightly engineered," meaning little blasting and levelling has been done along the route. Instead, it follows the lay of the land over massive outcroppings, up and down grades of 10 and 11 degrees, and across frozen rivers. "It's unbelievable driving," says Matco Transportation System's Damen Anderson, who has travelled the winter road between Wrigley and Fort Good Hope scores of times. "It's like off-roading, really."

Though it's not quite as dramatic as it's made out to be on the History Channel's reality TV series, *Ice Road Truckers*, driving a big rig hundreds of kilometres from the clos-

est town on a little-travelled road, in minus-40 and colder, is not for the faint of heart. The Matco trucks travel in convoys so that help is close at hand if one of them should go through the ice or need help. But Anderson says despite it all he'll feel some melancholy if an all-weather road ever pushes up this valley. "I'm already sad because they put some bridges in that took the challenge away," he says. "We used to just drive down through the creek, which often wasn't frozen over. Sometimes you'd fall through and the water would be up past the wheels. Sometimes you'd get stuck. You'd have three or four trucks lined up behind with one of them pulling you out." CONTINUED...

BY MICHAEL GANLEY

■ **RIGHT: Matco patriarch Ray Anderson says a Mackenzie Valley highway would be a godsend.**

