



Ready To Take Advantage of New Infrastructure Dollars



In the next few weeks we'll find out what additional resources the provincial and federal governments will make available to municipalities to address their social, physical, and green infrastructure needs. There have been numerous hints that more financial supports will be made more readily available to local governments, but the actual details won't be known until we see the federal and provincial budgets in the coming weeks.

A recently issued *Report Card* on the state of Canada's infrastructure points out that almost 60% of the nation's core infrastructure is owned and maintained by municipal governments and that, due to the lack of proper asset management planning and insufficient annual investments, fully one-third of this infrastructure is in fair, poor, or very poor condition. This represents a national municipal infrastructure deficit of approximately \$389 billion or \$28,000 per Canadian household.

The *Report Card* also points out that annual investments in infrastructure based on an asset management plan results in significant savings to municipalities and their tax payers. It recommends that communities of all sizes, but particularly smaller communities, would benefit from increased asset management capacity and that all communities should consider issuing an annual State of Infrastructure Report.

While Quesnel did not participate in the research leading to this national report card, our City has already implemented all the best practices recommended in the report. This includes:

- conducting a robust appraisal of our infrastructure condition;
- creating a long term asset management plan;
- preparing a five year capital plan based on our asset management plan;
- adjusting our fiscal framework to raise the finances required to address our annual infrastructure deficit;
- adding capital planning capacity to our public works department; and
- proactively preparing "shovel ready" projects to take advantage of federal and provincial infrastructure dollars as they come available.

So, Quesnel is ready and able to engage in whatever new infrastructure programs the federal and provincial governments come up with.

However, previous federal and provincial infrastructure programs had two shortcomings: they tended to be narrowly focussed on what the senior levels of government believed were the priority needs and they required municipal governments to come up with one-third of the total project costs. This limited the ability of most municipalities to participate in these infrastructure programs fully, if at all. There's some buzz that this dynamic may be changing; that local governments may be more involved in priority setting and that the required financial contribution from municipalities will be reduced.

If the current rhetoric about changes to the federal infrastructure program turns into reality this would be good news for Quesnel, as Council's proactive management of our budget and our infrastructure program has positioned the City well to take advantage of any new opportunities the federal and provincial governments make available. We will have "shovel ready projects" to expand our trail networks, improve our road systems, update our water system, improve accessibility, and attract investment in both affordable and market housing. We're in a good position to take advantage of any infrastructure programs that will be announced in the coming weeks.

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