

Shovel Ready Projects



Communities the size of Quesnel often miss out on opportunities to attract grant funding and infrastructure dollars from the provincial and federal governments because they don't have projects ready to go when the funding programs become available, as, in many cases, the higher levels of government require projects to be completed within a year to a year and a half of their funding announcements. For a major project, it can take that long just to secure the land, conduct public and stakeholder consultations, complete construction drawings, put the project out to tender, and award the contract.

Another reason local governments have a hard time applying for major federal and provincial grant opportunities is that these programs usually require the local government to contribute to the project, anywhere from 10 to 50 per cent of the total budget. For local governments struggling to maintain their core infrastructure, programs, and services, it is almost impossible to cobble together the additional funds needed to participate in federal and provincial infrastructure programs, especially when they often require the project to be "incremental" to what the local government would normally do with their property taxes.

In the case of major "incremental" projects, local governments often have to go through the referendum process to secure their contribution toward the project costs (through borrowing). This alone can negate the grant application from being successful because of the additional time involved in securing the funds and the possibility of the referendum failing.

These financing issues are further compounded by the fact that the federal and provincial governments open up their funding envelopes on an ad hoc basis and generally outside the normal budgeting cycle of local governments. We can never predict when a particular program will be made available, we're usually given a short window to apply to the program when it is announced, and we never know when the successful applicants will be announced. Frankly, the whole process is disrespectful and more about federal/provincial politics than good public policy and wise investment of your tax dollars.

These are the main reasons why Quesnel City Council and the North Cariboo Joint Planning Committee (NCJPC -- made up of Council and the four Northern Rural Directors of the CRD) have been proactively working to develop "shovel-ready" projects for our City and surrounding region, and why the City has focused on making sure it has the reserves needed to take advantage of any federal and provincial grants when and if they are made available. We don't want to miss out on any opportunity to stretch our limited tax dollars by securing investments in our City and region from your federal and provincial tax dollars.

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