

September 13, 2016

The Honourable Amarjeet Sohi
Minister of Infrastructure and Communities
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

VIA EMAIL & ONLINE SUBMISSION

Email to: amarjeet.sohi@canada.ca

Subject: Government of Canada Infrastructure Plan Consultations

Minister Sohi:

On behalf of Sturgeon County Council, thank you for the opportunity to provide input into *Investing in Canada: The \$120 Billion Infrastructure Plan*, through which the federal government will invest \$120 billion in infrastructure over the next 10 years related to **Communities, Green Infrastructure, Public Transit and Social Infrastructure**.

As you may know, Sturgeon County covers more than 2,300 square kilometers of prime agricultural land and is located close to several large urban centres. With Alberta's Industrial Heartland and diverse rural and urban economies, we are seeing an unmatched opportunity for investment and growth that could result in thousands of new jobs and billions in GDP.

As you are aware, municipalities struggle to receive adequate, reliable and steady sources of funding to enable long-term infrastructure planning and community sustainability. From Sturgeon County's perspective, open and timely communication with the federal government, as well as clear criteria for funding will support Sturgeon County to best utilize available funds to meet the challenges of a dynamic and growing municipality, essential to the well-being of Alberta and Canada.

In regards to the four categories your Ministry is soliciting feedback on, Sturgeon County offers the following comments:

Communities

As we have indicated, reliable and steady sources of federal funding would help ensure municipalities have adequate funding for various infrastructure priorities. Investing in municipal infrastructure will help the federal government achieve its central priorities: boosting Canada's economic growth and potential; fostering innovation; and mitigating and adapting to climate change.

In the case of Sturgeon County, many of Council's priorities concern road and bridge infrastructure, given the necessity to transport people and goods, vital to sustaining and growing Canada's economy. Specifically, over 4,000 cars, industry and agricultural vehicles travel on the County's inventory of 1,477 km of gravel roads and 298 km of paved roads daily. Our road network represents our single largest infrastructure cost, and represents 63% of the County's infrastructure asset base.

Of this inventory, 34% will need replacement prior to 2020, and 26% will need replacement between 2020 and 2035. Currently, Alberta Municipal Sustainability Initiative (MSI) capital funding totals \$1.2 billion for all municipalities, whereas the replacement of all County roads alone is estimated at \$253 million.

In addition to roads, bridges are also necessary to maintain an effective transportation network. At this point in time, Sturgeon County maintains a bridge inventory estimated at \$106 million, of which 55% should be scheduled for replacement prior to 2020. Most rural municipalities in Alberta face similar circumstances, as the Provincial Government ceased funding of rural bridges in 2013 and Alberta Transportation estimates it would take nearly \$700 million over the next decade to eliminate rural Alberta's bridge deficit. Without support from other orders of government, rural municipalities are challenged to maintain their bridge inventories.

Until recently, much of the provincial transportation infrastructure within Alberta's Industrial Heartland did not meet the demands of the area. However, this is changing as earlier this year the Alberta Government announced funding for twinning of area highways, as well as intersection improvements and signalization. In the future, enhanced funding for provincial and municipal governments, in combination with effective asset management, will help to ensure Canada's road and bridge infrastructure is maintained and enhanced to meet the needs of communities and industry.

Specifically, the federal government could increase its allocations to the Federal Gas Tax Fund (of which Sturgeon County receives approximately \$1 million annually) and the Building Canada Grant to help ensure municipalities can address infrastructure deficits, and accommodate and promote the economic growth and livability of communities. Predictable, transfer-based funding models that draw on local expertise and decision-making will empower municipalities to direct funds to strategic projects that offer the best return on investment.

Green Infrastructure

Municipal green infrastructure projects support clean water, waste management and help reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Sturgeon County achieves this through the maintenance of a distribution and transmission system of more than 170 km, as well as managing 12 pumphouses and 5 lift stations. Clean water is a necessity for Canadian communities, and Sturgeon County Council encourages the federal government to continue to ensure grant funding is available to maintain and upgrade water and wastewater infrastructure as growth occurs. Continued investment in the Clean Water Wastewater Fund will help to ensure this.

However, with nearly \$200 million allocated to Alberta in 2016 under this fund, and given that there are over 300 municipalities in Alberta, the federal government should remain cognizant of municipal infrastructure deficits and the potential need for this fund to be enhanced in future years. Through predictable funding, the federal government can tap local expertise, and more federal investment will produce more results.

Additionally, as the need for municipally-owned facilities grows, the federal government should maintain having incentive-based programs available to municipalities that promote the use of innovative energy technologies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions in new-builds and retrofits. The Green Municipal Fund, administered by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities is an excellent example.

Public Transit

The Public Transit Infrastructure Fund (PTIF) is the primary means of municipalities accessing federal funds for public transit projects. In 2016, the allocation to Alberta was approximately \$350 million. Sturgeon County is an active member on the Capital Region Board's Transit Committee, and contracts the City of Edmonton to provide transit services to CFB Edmonton in the County. Earlier this year, the Capital Region Board provided a listing of eligible projects to Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation Minister Brian Mason, requesting slightly over \$150 million through PTIF.

Continued federal funding of PTIF is crucial to ensuring an effective public transit system within the Edmonton Metropolitan Region, especially as the region is expected to grow by 1 million people over the next 30 years, and as such, the need for public transit will increase.

Social Infrastructure

Within a municipal context, social infrastructure includes affordable housing, shelters and cultural and recreational infrastructure. In Sturgeon County, many social services are provided by the great volunteer and community associations in our municipality, enabled through central gathering places like arenas and community halls. Much of this infrastructure has been supported through community fundraising and contributions from Sturgeon County Council.

Again, as Sturgeon County's population is anticipated to grow by as much as 90% over the next 30 years, and the entire Edmonton Metropolitan Region is expected to rise by 1 million people, the need for social infrastructure will increase, and having financial support from the federal order of government will help to ensure municipalities and community organizations can continue to provide social infrastructure that builds active and inclusive communities.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on the Government of Canada Infrastructure Plan. Sturgeon County Council looks forward to continuing to work with our provincial and federal counterparts to maintain and enhance strong communities within Sturgeon County.

Best Regards,

Tom Flynn – Mayor
Sturgeon County

cc. Sturgeon County Council
Honourable Rona Ambrose, Member of Parliament for Sturgeon River—Parkland
MLA Brian Mason, Minister of Alberta Infrastructure and Transportation
