

Federal Budget Recommendations

As a part of the:

**House of Commons
Standing Committee on Finance
2011 Pre-Budget Consultations**

Submitted by:

Canadian Public Works Association

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Section I: Who We Are

Established in 1986, the Canadian Public Works Association (Association Canadienne des Travaux Publics) is the national voice for the Canadian public works community. The scope of public works is poorly understood and our members' contributions to the communities in which they serve often go unacknowledged. Quite simply public works is the backbone of society. Water and wastewater treatment, roads and bridges, traffic signals and lighting, sanitation, mass transit, and snow removal are just a glimpse of what public works professionals do to ensure our communities are sustainable and safe, healthy places to live, work, play, and invest.

As the national voice of public works, we communicate with the federal government to offer our perspective on public policy matters that intersect with our expertise. Through collaboration we have partnered with the Government of Canada on several fronts, such as:

- Co-Chairing the National Asset Management Working Group to develop a national framework for the integrated and effective management of existing and new municipal infrastructure that reduces risk and saves taxpayer dollars.
- Providing critical input resulting in a streamlined application process for the Infrastructure Stimulus Fund, thereby ensuring quick approval of projects matched by due diligence.

Section II: Executive Summary

Pursuant to the House of Commons Finance Committee's (FINA's) invitation, CPWA is pleased to provide recommendations that will:

- Create new jobs and facilitate the transfer of infrastructure management skills to First Nations communities; and,
- Lay the foundation for the next generation of infrastructure programming to position the Canadian economy to excel.

Recommendation #1

Create mentorship opportunities linking public works professionals and First Nations. Programming would address the need for training, certification and capacity development to assist First Nations in improving life-cycle management of civil infrastructure assets, including water and wastewater treatment facilities. It would also serve a risk assessment purpose to identify assets in need of maintenance, decommissioning or replacement and prioritize the resultant work and funding requirements.

Recommendation #2

Allocate resources for consultations between the Government of Canada and the infrastructure community to develop Canada's infrastructure action plan. In order to achieve best results, evaluations of the current state of key infrastructure assets, such as highways, border crossings, bridges, IT networks, and water and wastewater treatment facilities need to be conducted. Assessment of infrastructure should also incorporate changing needs and population growth.

Section III: Issues

1. Create Mentorship Opportunities Linking Public Works and First Nations

The Government of Canada announced in Budget 2010 that it was committed to undertake a comprehensive review of the current approach to financing First Nations infrastructure. Spearheaded in partnership between the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development and First Nations representatives the review focuses on ways to more effectively support access by First Nations to alternative sources of financing, and approaches to improve the life-cycle management of capital assets.

CPWA has considerable experience implementing strategies and initiatives that promote capacity building, professional development, certification and accreditation of public works agencies. CPWA in partnership with its sister organization the American Public Works Association has developed training programs in public works, covering all public works disciplines and management topics. Moreover, CPWA was one of the founding partners of Canada's InfraGuide, which established best practices in several areas including governance, water and transport.

By investing in projects that link public works with First Nations, communities will be positioned to develop the human resources capabilities that will enable them to better manage and extend the lifespan of their infrastructure assets and save in long term replacement costs. Moreover, as infrastructure assets are managed and maintained to professional standards, one can easily anticipate that the quality of life will be improved within communities. This doesn't just yield social and public health benefits, it becomes a generator of wealth and employment by enhancing a community's ability to grow existing businesses and attract new investment.

Recommendation #1

Implement a pilot program that links public works practitioners with First Nations communities. Programming would address the need for training, certification and capacity development to assist First Nations in improving life-cycle management of civil infrastructure assets, including water and wastewater treatment facilities. It would also serve a risk assessment purpose to identify assets in need to maintenance, decommissioning or replacement.

2. Develop Canada's Infrastructure Action Plan

Two objectives of the next phase of the Economic Action Plan as outlined in the June federal budget—those being job creation and supporting Canadian families and communities—cannot be met in the absence of a modern, reliable and safe infrastructure system. At the same time, the future of the Government of Canada's plans for investing in infrastructure beyond 2014—with the exception of a few permanent sources of funding such as the Gas Tax transfer—is not currently developed.

The withdrawal of infrastructure stimulus spending coupled by the expiration of the Building Canada Plan in 2014, with existing funds largely committed, means that the time to prepare the next generation of long-term strategically focused infrastructure programming is now. Canada's premiers recently underscored this when they released a joint statement in July calling for the timely development of strategic infrastructure policies to facilitate trade by better leveraging gateway and border crossing infrastructure. CPWA agrees, but would broaden the need to develop a new strategic infrastructure plan to include other categories of infrastructure like water and wastewater, broadband, energy generation and transmission, and others.

Encouragingly, the Government of Canada accepts the need to engage infrastructure stakeholders. In its recent June budget the Government of Canada declared that consultations between the infrastructure community and federal government to develop the next generation of infrastructure policies would occur.

While no details on the scope, scale and timing of these discussions were included in the budget, CPWA feels it is important that the process must include all levels of government, First Nations and experts from the infrastructure community. Given such a large community of interests sufficient funding will need to be allocated that supports the inclusion of all stakeholders and ensures that Infrastructure Canada has the means to sustain dialogue through multiple phases and rounds of consultation.

Moreover, while the end goal of the consultations between the infrastructure community and the federal government would be to develop the framework for the next strategic infrastructure program, it will, in the process need to examine several fundamental questions, such as:

- What worked under the Building Canada Plan and likewise what did not?
- What recent lessons have been learned about streamlining applications for infrastructure funding that can be applied to minimize red tape and speed approvals?
- Should the next generation of infrastructure programming be more narrowly focused and have more restrictive funding categories or should it be broadly based?
- What is the federal government's role in infrastructure? For example, should infrastructure funding be focused to supporting policy objectives that exist within clear areas of federal jurisdiction?

Recommendation #2

Allocate sufficient resources for consultations between the Government of Canada and the infrastructure community for the purpose of developing a framework for the next generation of infrastructure programming in Canada. In order to achieve best results, evaluations of the current state of key infrastructure assets, such as highways, border crossings, bridges, IT networks, water and wastewater treatment facilities need to be conducted.

Section IV: Acknowledgements

The Canadian Public Works Association and our 2,000 members who are drawn from across Canada and encompass all disciplines of public works would like to thank the House of Commons Finance Committee for the opportunity to table our recommendations as a part of the 2011 Pre-Budget Consultations.

We would be pleased to provide additional information concerning our recommendations at the Committee's request.