

July 9, 2021

Infrastructure Canada
Communications
1100, 180 Kent Street
Ottawa ON K1P 0B6

RE: Canada's National Infrastructure Assessment: Submission from the Union of British Columbia Municipalities

Dear Sir or Madam,

The Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) welcomes Canada's commitment to undertaking a national infrastructure assessment which identifies the needs and priorities for the nation's infrastructure. As the voice of all local governments in British Columbia, we have advocated for, and administered, infrastructure programs that foster economic growth, create clean communities, and support strong and resilient communities.

Local infrastructure has, and continues to be, the foundation on which Canada's economy rests. Reliable infrastructure and modern transportation networks are critical to the efficient flow of goods and people. State of the art recreation and cultural facilities help businesses attract skilled labor and young families. Upgraded water and sewage plans support healthy populations and protect the environment. As owners of 62% of all infrastructure in Canada, local governments play a critical role in planning, funding, building and maintaining public infrastructure.

The demands for sustained and strategic investments in local infrastructure have never been so great as they are today. Local governments are now called upon to fund and deliver an expanding array of services; meet regulatory requirements imposed on them by the provincial and federal government; and maintain existing infrastructure while addressing infrastructure deficits. In BC alone, there is an estimated \$19.9 billion infrastructure gap of immediate renewal and replacement infrastructure for local governments. The demands for new infrastructure investments will be even greater in the future.

To create and maintain the infrastructure BC's communities need, UBCM recommends the following elements for assessing, coordinating and financing Canada's infrastructure strategy as envisioned in a National Infrastructure Assessment (NIA):

- Adopt a co-ordinated partnership approach amongst local governments, provincial governments and Canada on assessing the state of infrastructure, identifying gaps and measuring progress on sustainable service delivery.
- Incorporate a climate lens on all current and future infrastructure investments which supports the advancement of local, provincial and national climate action goals in reducing emissions and creating weather resilient communities.

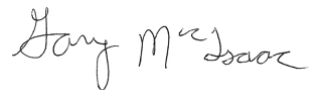
- Facilitate the integration of climate data, such as predictive modelling, energy and emissions data, into infrastructure decision making as well as support innovative 'green infrastructure' projects that could be replicable templates in communities.
- Include an asset management lens, which provides effective asset management tools to fund operations, maintenance and renewal costs which ensure the sustainability of a national infrastructure plan.
- Incorporate local governments into the design and implementation of the NIA to ensure that the diverse needs, experiences and perspectives of all sized communities are reflected in the infrastructure strategy.
- Ensure long-term, predictable and sustainable funding for local governments in recognition of their role as the largest owners of public infrastructure.
- Employ the current Gas Tax Fund model of direct transfers to local governments to invest in critical local infrastructure needs.
- Commit to a consistent local government share for application-based infrastructure projects to provide the predictability necessary for project success.
- Maximize local government choice and flexibility in ensuring funds are invested in the areas with the greatest need and economic return.
- Permit flexibility on project categories to include all local government assets, eligible costs, cost-sharing, procurement and timelines to ensure funding is sensitive to local conditions, priorities and emerging needs.
- Devise clear financial cost-sharing models that permit 'stacking' of grants to address changing market conditions, cost overruns, and limited local government revenue generation and borrowing ability.
- Link capital funding to local government asset management and long-term planning.
- Streamline program requirements to reduce burdensome reporting regimes for local governments and program administration.
- Involve local governments in the decision-making, oversight and administration of infrastructure funding programs where local governments are funding recipients.

As an advocate for local governments, UBCM has participated as a partner with the federal and provincial governments in the development and administration of infrastructure programs. We have developed extensive experience and expertise, and can add significant value in creating effective, efficient and accountable infrastructure programs. As such, UBCM would welcome the opportunity to help represent the local government voice on the advisory body and/or technical working groups of the National Infrastructure Assessment.

The development of the National Infrastructure Assessment is a necessary step for ensuring the sustainability of infrastructure and service delivery in our communities.

We thank you in advance for your consideration of our submission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary MacIsaac". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'G' and a stylized 'M'.

Gary MacIsaac
Executive Director