

OPINION-EDITORIAL

NEW INFRASTRUCTURE SPENDING BENEFITS LOCAL COMMUNITIES

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April 3, 2009
Approx. 520 words

No matter where you live in B.C., you've probably felt the impact of what's happening in the global economy in one way or another. People are worried about their jobs, their homes, their futures. Although the factors driving this economic downturn are beyond our control, there are measures that can be undertaken to protect jobs, families and communities.

In February, the B.C. government announced a \$14 billion capital infrastructure program that will create as many as 88,000 jobs over three years. As part of this major initiative, on March 17, Premier Gordon Campbell announced close to \$800 million in funding for public infrastructure projects in housing, education and public safety. These projects will create over 4,800 jobs in communities across British Columbia. Getting new projects started quickly and keeping people working throughout B.C. is a critical objective.

In the mid-Vancouver Island area, a number of key infrastructure projects have already been identified and are moving forward.

Here are just a few examples of how some of that money will be spent throughout this region. Qualicum Beach will receive \$2.2 million for a major upgrade to its water supply system. This project will revitalize the aging infrastructure that now supplies one-third of Qualicum Beach's drinking water. Parksville will receive \$1.7 million to upgrade Moilliet Street in the city's downtown core. Improvements will include widening of the street and installing traffic calming devices. And Port Alberni will receive \$1.1 million to replace and improve the efficiency and reliability of the China Creek water main. The project will improve 3.2 km of critical water supply infrastructure, increase operator safety and reduce water loss.

Elsewhere, Gold River has been allocated \$360,000 in federal and provincial funding for upgrades to a local arena's refrigeration plant. The Regional District of Nanaimo will receive \$221,625 in federal and provincial funding for a Drinking Water and Watershed Protection monitoring program. And Ladysmith will receive \$375,000 in funding to replace an existing grass-surfaced, single-use baseball field in the community with a multipurpose, artificial-turf field.

There is perhaps no better time for B.C. to be investing in new capital infrastructure projects. Interest rates are at historic lows and B.C.'s triple-A credit rating provides financial flexibility. Building on a record of sound fiscal management, B.C. will fund its infrastructure

spending and stimulus initiatives at the best possible terms. This will ensure the provincial debt burden remains among the lowest in Canada.

Building stability and confidence during tough times is no easy task. But there are measures that can be undertaken now that will benefit British Columbians in all regions of the province. Moving quickly to advance infrastructure projects that create thousands of jobs while improving the quality of life for British Columbians is a vital part of achieving this goal.

Note: to view a list of infrastructure projects currently planned or now in development throughout B.C., please visit: www.gov.bc.ca/infrastructure

The list will be updated as new projects are added.