

OPINION-EDITORIAL

NEW INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS BENEFIT LOCAL COMMUNITIES

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April 7, 2009
Approx. 530 words

No matter where you live in BC, 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. And 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 recently 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. These are in addition to projects already announced. Getting new projects started quickly and keeping people working throughout B.C. is a critical objective.

Throughout the Fraser Valley, a number of new 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 parts of Fraser Valley. In Abbotsford, the province is investing approximately \$11 million in a 40-unit supportive housing development. As well, Abbotsford will receive nearly \$940,000 to help build six kilometers of the multi-use Discovery Trail. The District of Hope will receive \$6.6 million to replace the Kawkawa Lake Road Bridge. Harrison Hot Springs will receive \$400,000 in federal and provincial funding for renovations to Memorial Hall.

Elsewhere, the Fraser Valley Regional District will receive \$985,600 to connect additional residents to the Hatzic Prairie Water System. The District of Kent will receive \$400,000 in federal and provincial funding to make improvements to the intersection of Highway 9 and Morrow Road. Nearly \$17 million will be invested for a new elementary school in Cloverdale as well as four school seismic upgrade projects. An investment of over \$17.3 million will be made for upgrades at the Fraser Regional Correctional Centre and the Alouette Correctional Centre for Women near Maple Ridge.

These eight projects alone will create 350 direct jobs in the Fraser Valley region.

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 recession 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

This list will be updated as new projects are added.

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