

OPINION-EDITORIAL

NEW INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS BENEFIT PRINCE GEORGE

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These are difficult economic times. 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 package 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. These are in addition to projects already announced. Getting new projects started quickly and keeping people working throughout B.C. is a critical objective.

In the Prince George area, 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 the region.

More than \$64 million will be invested in highway improvements in the Prince George area. This includes \$9.5 million to improve safety at the intersection of Highway 16 and Domano/Tyner Boulevards. Another \$40 million will be spent to realign and widen Highway 97 through the Pine Pass between Bennett Creek and Link Creek, and to build two new bridges over the Pine River.

Elsewhere, the federal and provincial governments are investing \$29.6 million to upgrade the trades building at the College of New Caledonia in Prince George and to build a new industry training facility in Quesnel. A further \$21.7 million will be used to build a plant that will use waste wood as biofuel at the University of Northern British Columbia. The campus's heating and cooling system will also be upgraded.

A further \$2.5 million is being invested to upgrade and enhance the Prince George courthouse and regional correctional centre. As part of the new Seniors' Rental Housing Initiative, thirty new modular housing units for seniors and people with disabilities will be built in Prince George. In addition, up to eight units will be built in each of Valemount and

Mackenzie and up to 10 units will be built in McBride.

These nine projects alone will create over 700 direct jobs in the Prince George area.

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

This list will be updated as new projects are added.