
OPINION-EDITORIAL

NEW INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS IN THOMPSON OKANAGAN CREATE JOBS

By Colin Hansen
Minister of Finance
March 31, 2009
Approx. 500 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. 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 throughout 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 Thompson Okanagan, 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.

In March, the government announced accelerated investments of \$174 million for highway improvements in B.C.'s Interior. This includes a \$20 million Road project near Armstrong that will upgrade four kilometres of Highway 97A from two lanes to four lanes, a \$42 million project to widen 3.1 kilometres of the Trans-Canada Highway through the Hoffman's Bluff area east of Kamloops and \$19.5 million will be invested in road upgrades as part of the Pritchard to Hoffman's Bluff project. In addition, the Province is also partnering with the City of Kelowna on a \$23.5-million project to widen Highway 33 to four lanes between Muir Road and Gallagher Road.

In the Thompson-Nicola Regional District, Blue River will receive \$777,000 to replace a water system. And in Oliver, Southern Okanagan Secondary school will get a \$27.5 million upgrade. Elsewhere, the city of Kamloops will receive \$14.2 million for upgrading its wastewater treatment plant. And West Kelowna will receive \$6 million for extension of sewer

services.

These eight projects alone will create over 980 direct jobs in the Thompson Okanagan 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.

-30-

-30-